KENNEDY'S SECOND BEST

JOHN D. FREEMAN

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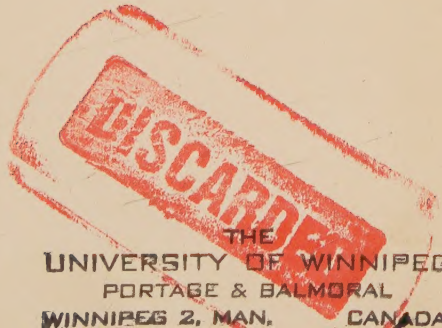

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KENNEDY'S SECOND BEST

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Kennedy's Second Best

A Story of the Great Northwest

BY
JOHN D. FREEMAN
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McCLELLAND & STEWART
PUBLISHERS - - TORONTO

1926

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I

WESTWARD HO!

IT was a steaming afternoon towards the end of June and that Chinese puzzle, by courtesy called the Toronto Union Station, was in its normal state of clamourous confusion, when an enthusiastic company of people elbowed their way through the crowded entrance hall, down the winding, iron-shod stairway and over the deadly level crossings to track number nine. They had assembled to say "God speed" to Gordon Kennedy, Minister of Rosemont Memorial Church, who was leaving for a three months' holiday in the West.

A troop of smart-looking girls fluttered on to the platform and scurried about in search of the car, "Columbia." Presently there were shrieks of delight indicative of a joyous discovery. The girls, most of whom belonged to Kennedy's choir, were followed by a number of young men, members of the Memorial Tennis Club. After these came a promiscuous stream of people, Sunday school teachers, church officials and members of the Rosemont congregation.

"Looks like a bottle of mixed pickles," remarked an amused bystander.

"Exactly," replied his companion; "he's got 'em bottled all right. Nicely pickled, too. Fifty-seven varieties, eh?"

"Something like that. Well, I guess he's a corker."

"Sure he is! Cork *and* corker. That's how he keeps 'em together. Inserts himself well into the bottle neck. Great art, that."

"Ever hear him?"

"A time or two. He's got the goods. Just the stuff the people like. Knows how to display it, too. First class window-dresser."

"All his stock in the window?"

"I should say, No. Plenty in reserve. Charming chap socially. Have you met him?"

"Only once. Had a game of golf with him recently. Interesting player. Keeps you guessing. Gets a long drive, not always straight. Works well under difficulties in the field. Powerful with the niblick, and a daisy with the putter."

"Same in the pulpit. Wins out with his last strokes. He knows how to put the ball down, all right."

Kennedy had been three years at Rosemount. It was his first charge. He was thirty, unmarried, and not yet engaged, despite the fact that his church assembled a goodly number of desirable girls, daughters of wealthy families. He had walked warily. His church officials approved this cautious demeanour. They were in no hurry for their min-

ister to marry. Marriage might possibly impair his popularity. It was worth something to have an attractive young bachelor in the pulpit. It invested the situation with a certain liveliness of expectancy.

At the present time Kennedy was "drawing capacity houses," rapidly increasing the membership and substantially augmenting the revenues of the church. The girls adored him because he was "such a darling." Young fellows rallied about him, finding him a manly sort, a genial companion and a good sport; church officials esteemed him a precious possession on account of the prosperity attending his ministry. To them he was a "live wire," with "nothing to match him between the two oceans."

As he stood beside the Pullman car in which he was to travel for the next few days and nights, Gordon Kennedy looked more like a prosperous young business man than a minister. He was well over six feet in height, broad-shouldered and straight. His square chin, firm jaw, wide, humourous mouth and deep-set, dark-brown eyes spoke of forcefulness and leadership. As usual, he was in unclerical garb. Just now he was wearing an elegantly cut suit of soft gray material, white silk shirt and collar, a flowing black silk tie, panama hat and highly-polished tan shoes.

The charm of Kennedy's social ways constituted a big factor in his popularity. He quickly became

interested in the people he met. He had the knack of putting them at their ease and making them feel they were understood and appreciated. He could move among a group of persons in such a way that each individual felt singled out for special attention.

On this occasion he was working well up to his record for general and particular sociability, as he patted the young fellows on their shoulders, squeezed the hands of the older men in a confidential grip and hailed the girls by their Christian names.

The negro porter of the "Columbia" brushed past, sweating and smiling. He was carrying an armload of parcels.

"It's well you has got a section to you'self, boss, else we wouldn't find sto'age," he remarked.

Presently the circle which pressed close round Kennedy opened up to make way for a man with a camera. He was photographer for the *Echo,* wishing to get a picture of the "send off," for the next illustrated weekly edition. "Would Mr. Kennedy be good enough to stand on the steps of the Pullman for a moment, while he grouped the friends on the platform?"

"Blow your picture!" exclaimed Kennedy; "I don't want to turn this little family affair into a publicity stunt."

"No escape, Mr. Kennedy, I assure you! I've taken a couple of shots already. There'll be a

picture, in any case, but it may not be satisfactory unless you pose."

"Oh, Mr. Kennedy, please!" shouted half a dozen girls in chorus. "It will be such a lovely souvenir. We all want to be in it."

Kennedy felt forced to yield, and a few moments later the photographer smiled, bowed his thanks, and wished him a happy holiday.

As Kennedy stepped down onto the platform, a middle-aged lady came forward asking if she might speak with him a moment?

"You do not know me," she said, "although I've been an occasional attendant at your Sunday evening services of late. I'm staying in Toronto for a while, but my home is in Vancouver. My name is Mrs. Silcox."

Kennedy smiled and lifted his hat.

"I believe I saw you last Sunday evening," he replied. "Did you not sit just on my right, the third or fourth row from the front?"

"Yes, I did. I wanted to say that I have a niece here, lately out from England, who is leaving for Vancouver by this train. She'll be in the "Columbia." Her name is Margaret Pearson. May I introduce her?"

"I shall be delighted to meet her," said Kennedy briskly. "I'm going as far as Calgary on the main line, and I'll see she's well looked after up to that point."

"Thank you so much! It's most kind of you!

She's going out to join her father. We were intending to make the trip together, but I shall be detained in Toronto for another fortnight and her father is urging her to hurry out."

Presently Kennedy found himself looking into a pair of clear, hazel eyes and listening to a voice of pure music.

"I begged Aunt not to trouble you, but she would have her own way. Please don't let me keep you from your friends!"

"Mrs. Silcox has done me a real favour, I can assure you," replied Kennedy. "Were you not at church along with Mrs. Silcox, last Sunday evening?"

"Yes. I enjoyed the service and your sermon impressed me."

He noted the pleasing oval of well-browned cheek which she presented for her aunt's kiss, and the delicately carved lips with which she gave her response. He marked how neat her figure looked, dressed for travelling comfort in a costume of navy blue. He felt convinced that he would not be bored on the way to Calgary.

As Margaret Pearson entered the "Columbia," she was the subject of many critical and not entirely unenvious glances.

The conductor was now calling out, "'Board! 'Board!" and warning non-passengers to stand clear. As Kennedy mounted the steps of the Pullman, there was a lusty outbreak of voices singing,

"For he's a jolly good fellow," accompanied by the waving of a half-a-hundred handkerchiefs. Kennedy waved his own handkerchief for a moment, then thrusting it into his pocket, touched his fingers to his lips and extended his arms in an all-inclusive adieu to his people until the train swept him from their sight.

II

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS AND A DOG

KENNEDY proceeded to his section mid-way down the Pullman. With something of dismay he surveyed the mound of gifts his friends had sent to the train. He frowned for a moment, then smiled and set to work entering in his diary a list of the parcels, along with the names of the donors. Most of the attached cards were in feminine handwriting.

He pressed the call-button. The negro porter answered promptly and stood at respectful attention. Kennedy pointed to the heap in front of him.

"Do you know how many packages you've stacked up here?"

"Ah don't know de exact number of 'em, Cap'n, but Ah reckon dey's somewhere between thutteen and fo'teen."

"Correct! Nine lots of fruit, four parcels of books and one bundle as yet unclassified. What's to be done with them? I haven't room here to stretch my legs."

"Well, Cap'n, Ah's open to do anything you propositions. Ah know where some of dat fruit can find storage without botherin' nobody."

Kennedy rose and took off his coat. He opened the boxes of fruit and inspected their contents. Quantity was matched by quality. Here were the choicest and most expensive delicacies of the season.

"To start with, porter, take these two boxes of fruit to the young lady in blue at the far end of the car and say that Mr. Kennedy asks her to accept them with his compliments."

When the porter returned for further instructions Kennedy handed him one of the largest boxes, saying: "That's for yourself, with my regards."

"Thank you, Cap'n!"

"I think I'll reserve two lots. The rest you can take to the train chef. Perhaps they'll come in handy for the dessert."

"Ah don't think de Company's rules would allow him to put 'em on de tables, Cap'n. Dey's strict about any tamperin' wid de maynoo."

"Then let him do what he likes with them."

"Excuse me, Cap'n, de chef's a married man wid a fambly. Yo doan want to put 'em all in mournin', I know. But if you give him all dat fruit he'll be a corpse tomorrow."

"Well, do you think you can save his life by going halves with him?"

"Ah's willin' to try, Cap'n. Ah always says, a short life and a merry one for me."

A space having been cleared in front of him, Kennedy stretched his legs and leaned back with his hands clasped behind his head. He was glad to

get away from the crowd for a while. He had been working hard and felt the need of a good, long rest. He craved a spell of free outdoor life. The invitation from his brother Jim to spend a couple of months on his Alberta ranch exactly coincided with his own desires. Two months in the saddle, roaming at will over the prairie, would put him in prime condition, and brace him for the next winter's work. He had remarked to some of his friends that just now his mind was like a squeezed lemon—all rind and no juice. They protested that his preaching had shown no lack of substance or flavour. There seemed to be a conspiracy to say nothing but pleasant things about him.

It was true—as his friends had been singing back there in Union Station—that Gordon Kennedy was a jolly good fellow; otherwise, he would have been spoiled by the adulations of the last three years. Nobody wanted to spoil him, but a host of people took the right way for doing it. He was flattered and pampered. The Press boomed him. He was one of those picturesque personalities whose ordinary sayings and doings were regarded as matters of public interest. If Gordon Kennedy sneezed the papers would announce that the popular pastor of Rosemont Church was suffering from a slight cold.

It could not truthfully be said that Kennedy went out of his way to court publicity, but it was observed that he gravitated to the spotlight as faithfully as

flowers turned to the sun. Perhaps he did it unconsciously.

He now opened one of the parcels and took out a book. It was a new novel entitled *The Binding Spell.* Having glanced through a few chapters he tossed it aside. The title had suggested a readable sort of story, but the thing turned out to be a sordid tale of a woman gambler. He was in no mood for making a mental journey through the fusty air of the social underworld.

He turned to the window to observe the scenery. They were traversing a belt of wheat-fields just beginning to take on a glint of gold. The farm-houses looked stiff and stolid. The trees, thinly sprinkled over the landscape, wore a limp and listless appearance. The air quivered in the heat. The atmosphere of the car was stifling, although the windows had been raised to the tops of the dust-screens. Most of the men had removed their coats and the women were furiously fanning themselves. Presently he grew drowsy and fell asleep.

Half an hour later he awoke. Looking up, he observed that Margaret Pearson had a pad of writing-paper on her knees and was busy with her fountain pen. He went forward and spoke to her.

"Aren't you very energetic for such a hot day?" he asked.

"I don't think so," was the reply. "I like to be busy, and I'm terribly behind with my correspondence."

"You English people are much addicted to letter-writing, I'm told."

"I believe we are. But I don't write long letters, except to my grandfather. He is old and lonely and deaf. He likes to get long screeds from me. My other friends say that my letters are only a few sentences slung together. Some of them go so far as to say that I could write my letters on a finger-nail."

He glanced down at her hands.

"It's a libel," he said. "But I came to ask if you will join me in a cold drink? They make them in very good style on these trains."

"Thank you, I *can* just do with one. I must thank you, too, for the delicious fruit you sent me. I hope you didn't rob yourself."

"Not at all. I found nine boxes of it piled up in my section."

She gave him an amused but searching glance.

"Your people evidently adore you," she said. "You must find it pleasant but sometimes a little embarrassing, perhaps."

Kennedy flushed slightly.

"They are over-kind to me, Miss Pearson. But what about that drink?—the juice of a couple of oranges, or lemons, squeezed into a big glass with plenty of crushed ice, sugar to your taste, filtered water and a dash of soda! What do you say?"

"It sounds positively thrilling," she answered with a smile. "I haven't the courage to say 'No.'"

"Orange or lemon?"

"Orange, please."

When the porter appeared, Kennedy gave the necessary instructions regarding the drinks—one of orange and one of lemon.

"Leave it to me, Gov'nor," said the porter, "and I'll fetch you a couple of drinks that'll make you wish you was a pair of giraffes with three yards of throat to taste with."

While waiting for the refreshments, Kennedy inquired how long she had been in Canada and if she were making an extended visit.

"I've only been here three weeks," she said, "but I may remain for the rest of my life. It will largely depend upon my father's movements. He is in business in Vancouver and I learn from some of his recent letters that he isn't altogether settled in his plans. I'm quite in love with this country and shouldn't object to making my home here."

Kennedy was observing her closely—the straight eyebrows, the curved mouth, the shapely hands. He noted her ears—what delicately tinted, shell-like things they were! And those tiny, bluebell pendants! He had been prejudiced against earrings, but these seemed to be a part of the wearer and in harmony with her general appearance. Again he was struck by the music of her voice, so different from the women's voices he had been accustomed to hear. It occurred to him that one of

the choicest gifts which Nature could confer upon a woman was a pleasing voice.

"I hope you won't find the journey too tiring," he said. "It's a long way to Vancouver and much of the scenery is rather monotonous. Some of it, indeed, is exceedingly dreary, but after you sight the Rockies it is superb."

"I'm expecting to enjoy every bit of it. Have you been over the line before?"

"Once, out to the coast; and on another occasion, as far as Calgary on the way to my brother's Alberta ranch. That's my destination now—Black Gulch on Moon River. I'm to spend my holiday there, doing the cowboy act."

"Busting bronchos and lassoing wild cattle?" she asked.

"Something of that sort," he replied with a laugh. "Do you think it's beneath a preacher's dignity?"

"Not at all! I think it's very much up to the mark of a man. If I were a man I should love that life. I'm fond of cattle and horses and riding."

"You're real English, I see," he replied. "I've never seen an English person yet, who wasn't passionately fond of animals. They adore horses, go daft on dogs and dote on pigs. They seem to understand animals better than we do, and to have a closer comradeship with them. They make pals of them. Why is it so?"

She looked at him with a smile in her eyes.

"Possibly it's because animals are such good servants. We like to be served. Besides, they can't talk. We love them for that, too."

"I don't think the English are peculiar in those respects," replied Kennedy. "None of us suffer rivals kindly. But, let me tell you, I have a dog that *can* talk. He talks sense. Kindly spoken, too, and always tells the truth."

"An exemplary creature, surely! What is his denomination?"

"He's an Airedale. I call him Laddie. We're great pals."

"You'll be missing him a lot this summer, won't you?"

"No, I've brought him along. He's away forward in the baggage car."

"Oh, I should love to see him. Can't you introduce me?"

"Certainly, after we've had our drinks." Presently the porter appeared bearing a tray on the upturned palm of his hand. As he deposited the tray, he remarked: "Boss, Ah reckon dese two glasses would be worth a million dollars to ole Dives, and youse is gettin' 'em for fifty cents."

Kennedy handed him a dollar and motioned him away.

For a moment or two they sipped their drinks in silence. Then the girl looked up at Kennedy and said: "It's perfectly heavenly! Nectar fit for

the gods! But you paid an enormous price. Aren't you people spoiling these negro porters?"

"I don't think so. They do a lot for one's comfort on a trip like this, and they like to do it, when they get fairly well paid."

"Now I'm beginning to get nervous," she said. "You do everything here on such a colossal scale. I haven't more than twenty dollars that I can well spare for tips on this occasion. Do you think that will be enough to get me through to the coast undisgraced?"

Kennedy laughed. "Give him a couple of dollars before you leave and he'll love you forever," he said.

"But not with the same warmth and glow of affection as if I gave him five?" she replied archly.

"No doubt love works on a sliding scale. But, speaking of tips, I heard rather a good thing the other day. A passenger who had spent a night on a Pullman, said to the porter: 'Please tell me how much I should give you.'

"'Dey ain't no legislation enactions coverin' de case, Cap'n,' said the porter with a grin. 'Jest give me what you like.'

"'But what is the average tip?'

"The negro pondered for a moment. Presently he said: 'I reckon de average tip is one dollar.'

"The passenger thought the figure was pretty high, but he promptly handed out the dollar. As the negro slipped it into his pocket, he said: 'Thank

you, Cap'n. Ah doan mind tellin' you dat youse is de first man dat has given me de average tip in four years.' "

Margaret shook with laughter.

" Oh, I like that. Negroes evidently have a rich sense of humour."

" As humourous as the Irish," he replied. " But, shall we now take a look at Laddie? "

" Yes, please. I'm just dying to see him."

" It's quite a long journey and rather a rough one. He's six cars forward. The train is swaying a good deal just now. Perhaps we had better wait awhile till the going is smoother."

" No, no! I can negotiate it easily. And, remember, Laddie must be feeling lonesome. Let's go now! "

Kennedy led the way. As they went down the narrow corridor past the men's smoking room, the car gave a vicious lurch and he was thrown against the wall. Another instant and he was hurled in the opposite direction.

" Confound it! " he ejaculated as he regained his footing and glanced backward. " It is the rocky road to Dublin, sure enough! "

He was astonished to note that Margaret Pearson's equilibrium appeared to be undisturbed.

" Jupiter! You rode that wave all right, it seems," he said admiringly.

" Yes. You see I haven't lost my sea legs," she replied.

As they stepped out onto the wriggling platform he took her by the arm.

"Watch your step, here! These platforms are treacherous," he cautioned.

"Don't worry about me! But I think I can do better if you leave me to make my own way."

Saying this, she gently disengaged her arm. The train now seemed to be afflicted with nervous spasms. Warily they threaded the aisles of the cars and cautiously traversed the connecting floors.

"Bucking bronchos aren't in it with these crazy trains," remarked Kennedy, as he paused at the end of the fourth car. "You haven't experienced anything like this before, I fancy."

"Oh, yes, I have. There are trains running through Derbyshire that can hold their own with this one for doing the fox-trot. I think it rather jol—. . *Oh!*"

A sudden movement of the car had flung her forward into Kennedy's arms. He held her firmly for a brief moment while the train steadied down.

"Thank you," she said, as he released her. The words were lightly spoken, and she gave no hint of embarrassment.

Having reached the baggage-car, they made their way around stacks of piled-up trunks to the dog. Laddie gave a cry of delight and leaped to the end of his rope. Standing erect on his hind legs he waved his paws, uttering a whinnying noise that sounded almost human in its accents of welcome.

"Oh, the lovely darling!" cried Margaret Pearson.

As Kennedy stooped, Laddie put his paws on his master's shoulders and licked his face. Then, freed from his tether, he leaped again and again to Kennedy's breast with loud barkings of joy.

"Gently, Laddie, gently!"

The dog trembled with excitement.

"You must be on your best behaviour, Laddie. I'm going to introduce you to a lady."

Laddie turned his head in the direction of Margaret. He looked her up and down deliberately. Then he shook his head and violently blew air through his nose.

"Laddie, dear, don't despise me just because I'm a woman!" crooned Margaret.

The dog looked at her again and slowly shook his head.

"I know an Airedale is a man's dog and a one-man dog," said Margaret, "but he'd soon be willing to acknowledge me as an acquaintance if not as a friend."

"Laddie," said Kennedy sternly, "I'm ashamed of you. You're positively rude. I'll have nothing more to do with you until you've spent a season in penitence."

Laddie's head drooped. He went to a corner of the car and stood there with his head bowed solemnly between his fore-paws. Ten seconds passed. The dog remained motionless.

"Please don't prolong the ordeal," pleaded Margaret.

"He's a minister's dog," replied Kennedy. "He mustn't be encouraged to shorten his periods of penitence."

"You are teaching him to be a hypocrite," she retorted. "He is praying to be seen of men—at least—of a man and a woman."

"Well, see if you can call him away from his devotions!"

She clapped her hands and chirped, "Here, Laddie, Laddie! You've prayed long enough. It's time to sing and dance. Come, Laddie. Come!"

Except for a slight lifting of his ears, the dog made no response.

"May I stroke him?" she asked.

"Yes, if you like."

Gently she stroked his head and back and patted his sides. Seemingly she made no more impression upon him than if he had been stone.

"Amen!" said Kennedy softly. Immediately the dog leaped to his side.

"Now, then, Laddie, you're a good dog. A good Christian dog. I'm going to introduce you to this lady. Do you like the look of her?"

Laddie nodded his head.

"But suppose I tell you she's a Russian?"

The dog blew air through his nose, wheeled around and turned tail to Margaret.

"However, she's *not* a Russian. She's an English lady."

Laddie wheeled again, stood on his hind legs, straight as a soldier, and smartly saluted, holding his right paw to his ear.

"Miss Pearson, this is my good friend, Laddie Kennedy. He would like to shake hands with you."

Laddie advanced, extended his right paw and bowed his head.

Margaret shook his paw and patted him.

"I'm honoured by your acquaintance, Laddie."

"Be good enough to tell Miss Pearson that you are her very obedient, humble servant and that she may rely upon you to defend her in any time of need."

Laddie knelt down and licked her shoes.

"Correct! Now, tell her what you would be willing to do for her!"

He flopped to the floor and stiffened out, to all appearances a dead dog.

"You precious angel!" cried Margaret.

"Thanks for the compliment, Miss Pearson, but my wings haven't sprouted yet," said Kennedy.

"Fudge! Don't be absurd! How could one notice a man when there was a dog like that around?"

Kennedy burst into laughter. "Oh, I knew it would be that way. But, have you no qualms of conscience in making me jealous of my dog?"

"None whatever. Aren't you going to feed him?"

"Surely."

He opened a bag of dog-biscuit and placed one on the floor. Laddie started for it.

"Wait a minute! It's on trust," said Kennedy. Laddie stood stock still.

"Money is scarce these days. Railroad fares and porters' tips come heavy. That biscuit must be paid for in quarterly instalments. The first instalment is now paid. . . . And now the second . . . and now the third. . . . All paid." Instantly the biscuit disappeared into Laddie's mouth.

While Kennedy dealt out the biscuits, Margaret looked on in admiration of the beautiful animal—his thick crisp black saddle, his mild, brown eyes and his kindly intelligent face. A brakeman came in and chatted.

"He's a fine dog, sir," he said. "I reckon he'll be good with children. All them Airedales is keen on men and kiddies. They ain't so much for women folk, I'm told. I gave him a drink a while back and I'll see that he gets all the water he wants. What's his age?"

"Eighteen months. I don't think he'll make much fuss. He may cry a little after I leave him, but he'll soon get over it. I'll give him instructions. If he should get unhappy during the night I wish you'd let me know. Section Five—'Columbia.'"

"I'm sure he'll be all right, sir. I'll be here with him a good deal, and he's getting used to me."

"Thank you! Now, Laddie, I'm going to leave you for the night. I want you to be a good dog until I see you in the morning. Tell me what you're going to do when I've gone!"

The dog cried softly for a moment. Then he opened his mouth wide and held it open.

"What does he mean by that?" asked Margaret.

"He's laughing; telling me that his tears will be followed by smiles. I'm not to think that he will break his heart."

Next, Laddie began to utter a soft, musical sound. It was his evening hymn. After that he solemnly bowed his head for a moment, then stretched himself out and pretended to be sound asleep.

"All right, Laddie. Good-night!"

There was an affectionate leave-taking between master and dog and then Margaret Pearson threw her arms around Laddie's neck.

"You glorious creature!" she cried. "I could love you to distraction!"

Laddie licked her hand and then stood smartly at salute until they left the car. When the door had closed behind them, Margaret turned to Kennedy and said: "Don't let anyone tell me that animals have no souls! That dog *has* a soul, and a beautiful one. Of course, you've helped him to grow it."

Her face was flushed and her eyes glowed like stars.

Kennedy was delighted.

"I'm glad you like Laddie. It makes me feel as though you and I were already good friends."

She gave him a searching look and then said with emphasis, "I would feel a certain kinship with a South Sea islander if I found him on such terms with a dog like Laddie."

On the way back to their Pullman, he asked if she would share a table with him for meals. She gave a prompt and pleased assent. Just then they met the porter, who was announcing in well-spaced impressive tones: "Dinner—is—now—ready—in—the—dining—car."

III

MUTUAL INTERESTS

THE evening brought a flaming sunset, followed by a lingering twilight. In their conversation, lasting several hours, Kennedy and Margaret touched upon many matters of common interest. She seemed to have a well-stored mind and a broad mental outlook. He was charmed by the fresh and vivid way in which she expressed her thoughts. The character of the scenery through which they passed was constantly changing and she remarked upon the pleasure one experienced in travelling through such a country for the first time. It occurred to Kennedy that he was enjoying a similar pleasure. He, too, was traversing new territory as he talked with this interesting girl.

The next morning he was early astir. Having shaved and dressed, he found the time hanging heavily upon his hands while waiting for breakfast. Presently he became conscious of a certain amount of excitement, which increased as the moments passed.

For a considerable time the Pullman presented a scene of pantomimic confusion, as relays of sleepy and irritable passengers struggled into their gar-

ments behind fantastically bulging curtains, or made sudden irruptions into the open in various stages of dishabille. Kennedy watched with eagerness the swaying of the curtains which guarded Margaret Pearson's section. When the first call for breakfast sounded, she parted them and stepped forth with her toilet complete for the day. She looked the picture of healthful beauty. The golden morning seemed to be reflected in the ruddy brown of her cheeks and the clear lustre of her eyes. She was now dressed in a beige-coloured suit. The coat hung open, showing a small orange scarf of crèpe de chine. The cape attached to the coat gave a suggestion of miniature wings. The air around her bore a hint of lilac. She could have passed for a painting by Rembrandt.

"I hope you have had a good night," said Kennedy, as he hastened to join her.

"Thank you, I did, indeed."

"There was a lot of jolting and bumping. From midnight on we were doing one of the roughest parts of the line. The train kicked up a dickens of a row, I thought."

"I didn't feel anything of it," she answered. "I slept like a top. Quite an achievement, wasn't it, for my first night in a sleeping-car?"

"Very unusual, I should say. I scarcely slept at all."

They were now traversing a desolate region. Not a vestige of verdure could be seen—nothing

but a waste of naked boulders, away to the skyline. In the morning light, the gigantic masses of heaped-up rock resembled the bleached vertebræ of primeval monsters which had perished in colossal combat.

"Ghastly region, isn't it?" said Kennedy, glancing out of the window. "We are travelling over the bones of a dead world. It must be appalling to you after the park-and-garden beauty of England."

"Not at all! It makes me feel all the more glad to be alive. I find it has given me a ravenous appetite for my breakfast."

For a time they found it difficult to carry on conversation, owing to the noise of the train. Now, it would go roaring over some bridge beneath which a tortured stream hissed among the rocks as it writhed on its snakelike course. Again, the wheels of the cars would set up a deafening shriek as the train wriggled and scraped around sharp curves between towering walls of granite. The dishes rattled on the table and the food was hard to come by. Margaret Pearson gurgled with delight. When for the fourth time she lifted her fork with the same square of melon on it she declared, with pathetically pouted lips, "I should like to get this bit of cantaloupe into my mouth. I'm sure it must be delicious."

"Well, I'm going to treat this slice as it deserves," he said. "Why not follow suit? You don't mind getting your ears wet, do you?"

"No, indeed. Thank you for the suggestion and for the noble example."

Presently she was gazing at him over the top of her slice of melon with eyes at once appealing and reproachful. He burst into a guffaw of laughter. She lowered her hands and joined him in his merriment till the tears came into her eyes.

While the meal was in progress the blue expanse of Lake Superior flashed into view.

"What a magnificent sheet of water!" she exclaimed. "Look at that stretch of sand beach and those gloriously coloured rocks! I can scarcely believe the water isn't salt. It seems as though I can almost smell the brine."

Later on, as the train crossed the Nipigon, Kennedy said: "I had ten days' fishing in that river a couple of years ago, along with a party of Toronto friends. We took a cook and an Indian guide with us and had great sport."

"It makes me tingle all over to imagine it," she answered. "Do you shoot?"

"Not much,—only small stuff found on the prairies. I've not been in the bush for big game yet That's one of the thrills I'm looking forward to."

They sat without speaking for some time, looking out of the window. After a while she remarked: "You Canadians ought to be great men. I suppose you are. You get a big go at life."

He smiled as he replied: "We ought to have

some ' pep ' in us, as well as a bit of initiative. The stimuli are all here. It's a country where men can earn a living and live a life."

" I'm glad to hear you say that. It's painful to think of the crowds of people in the world who can only do one of those things, and more painful still to think of others who can do neither of them. I've met heaps of people who could earn a living, but didn't know how to live—didn't grasp the meaning of life—and I've met as many more who were shut out from real life because they couldn't earn a living. Between the two they create our social problems. Mr. Kennedy, I hope Canada will be able to help England to solve some of hers. You have room for millions of people here."

" Yes, but I imagine we're getting nearly all that want to come. England keeps a strong grip, you know, even upon her poorest people."

" True. She has bewitched them. They'd rather have half a loaf, a bit of cheese and a drink of beer in Shoreditch than own a farm in Saskatchewan. It will take a long time to give them better ideas of life and it will involve a lot of work."

" You're evidently interested in social reform," he said. " Have you made a study of it? "

" To some extent. I had three years of social settlement work in the East End of London."

Kennedy was amazed and something of his amazement showed in his face. It was difficult to imagine this refined, young woman spending her

time and strength amid scenes of filth and wretchedness. It seemed to him that she could better grace a *salon* than improve a slum.

"Did you enjoy it?" he asked.

"In many ways, yes; it was good for me. It put me in touch with reality. I think it kept me from growing selfish. Certainly it opened my eyes. A good many of my theories got badly smashed when they bumped up against the hard facts of everyday life in the East End."

"Do the labour organizations give much encouragement to social settlement work?"

"No, not a great deal. They're mostly concerned about wages and hours of work, and very little concerned about how the men spend their wages or what they do with their time when they're out of work. They haven't got to the real core of the poverty problem yet. In fact, they're not facing it. They think it's purely an economic problem and fail to see that it's a moral one as well. They are opposed to emigration."

"Don't you think this friction between capital and labour is bad for all concerned?" he asked.

"It's something more than friction," she replied. "It's grim, deadly, wasteful war. But, how can it be stopped? Things are just whirling round in a vicious circle. Work is needed to create capital and capital is needed to provide work. One would think that these two should be friends."

"You're not an extremist, I'm glad to see."

"No, but I think I'm something of a radical," she replied, smiling. "I wish I had two lives and could live them both at the same time," she went on. "I believe I could pack them both full!"

"I'm sure you could," he replied. "But, what about a morning call on Laddie? Are you ready for it?"

"Dying for it! Let's hurry right along!" She did not wait for him to lead the way, but tripped lightly down the car in advance. He hastened after her. She glanced backward for an instant and then broke into a run. Kennedy quickened his pace, thinking to overtake her at the entrance to the next car, knowing it would require a strong push to open the door. The strong push was given and the door was swinging shut before he reached it. When he next got a glimpse of his companion she was racing down the car with flying feet. She reached the baggage-car and had her arms around Laddie's neck before he could catch up with her.

"Jupiter! You're a swift one!" he cried, as Laddie leaped to greet him.

She stepped aside, saying, with a laugh, "Pardon my haste! But I adore him. Remember, you'll have him for his lifetime, while my time with him must be very brief."

"Jealous?" he queried.

"Frightfully," she replied.

"Incurably so?"

"No; I'll get over it; but the parting will be sore."

They spent half-an-hour in the car, playing with Laddie like two young children. The dog showed a growing friendship for Margaret Pearson. Once, when he was caressing her, with his body pressed hard against her knees, Kennedy objected.

"He'll soil your skirt," he said. "It's a shame for you to be messing around here in that lovely costume."

"Not at all! But, do you really like my outfit?"

"I do, indeed. It's elegant and vastly becoming,"

"Thanks! I made it myself."

"Then you're certainly an artist."

"No, not really an artist; only a lover of the beautiful."

"Love of the beautiful always expresses itself in some form of artistry," he responded.

"I wonder if that is so? May not one love the beautiful and yet lack the technical skill essential to artistry?" she asked.

"The technical skill will be developed in one form or another," he replied.

"I know people who love music, but they can neither sing nor play," she rejoined.

"That may be; yet they carry music in their souls and it sounds out somewhere in their lives."

She was silent for a moment and then said: "You are an artist in words. I was struck with

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that when I heard you preach. You can play with words."

"I hope I don't, however. I should rather work with them. Certainly I often work hard to get them arranged."

"I'm amazed. When I was listening to your sermon it seemed to me as if words just flocked to you, like doves to their windows."

"Carrier pigeons, Miss Pearson, labouriously trained to perform their duty."

"Is that really so? Aren't you a man who can do everything easily?"

"No, far from it. I sweat my brains and my soul over every sermon and address I deliver. Fortunately, I'm endowed with an unusual capacity for hard work. Often my preparation of a sermon is like scaling a cliff, pulling myself up hand over fist."

"Isn't it sometimes like going up in a balloon?"

"Occasionally, perhaps. But, then, the whole affair is light and airy. No getting at close, strong grip with things. Every man who would really possess his hilltop must pay the price of the climb."

IV

A BOLD ADVENTURE

KENNEDY spent the most of the next forenoon in reading, and in writing letters to be posted in Winnipeg. When he had finished he went to Margaret Pearson.

"We're getting into the real West now," he said—"the land of hope. No one ever gets discouraged west of Lake Superior. Out here, men never despair of their luck. They may suffer all kinds of losses, but they don't know what it means to get down-hearted. They expect to strike it rich on the next venture."

"Is that what makes them such persistent gamblers? I'm told they do gamble tremendously."

"Perhaps they do, but they work tremendously as well. I'm glad to get into this life for a while. It stirs one's blood."

"But, surely," she replied, "you are not going in either for gambling or hard work. You're on holiday."

"Yes, but while we're young the best form of recreation is a change of activity. I'm planning to lead a strenuous life on the ranch. As for gambling

—isn't every earnest and venturesome man essentially a gambler?"

"Do you mean that he lays bets on chances?" she asked.

"Yes. He bets his life over and over again."

She looked at him questioningly.

"I mean to say that life is a critical affair. Great issues are constantly balanced on the razor-edge of a single decision. We must often risk everything on a single throw. Perhaps we do that oftener than we are aware of. The critical circumstance may have an ordinary look. The fateful moment may wear no garb to distinguish it from the common moments of our common days. But, at the heart of it lies our destiny. When that moment arrives, if we have insight and courage, we bet our life, we stake our destiny on the chance it offers."

Margaret made no comment for a moment, but presently she said:

"That makes life very interesting, doesn't it? Possibly very tragic, also."

"True," Kennedy replied, "but it's a wise arrangement. It tends to keep us alert."

Owing to a blockade on the line, their train was delayed several hours at Winnipeg. They started out to do the city, accompanied by Laddie. The dog persisted in trotting between them, whinnying with delight.

As they made their way up Main Street, Marga-

ret exclaimed: "Oh, I'm so glad we had this stop-over! What an extraordinary place! It's like nothing else on earth. Look at those lovely Indians!"

Kennedy exploded with laughter. "Why, my dear young lady, they're about as ugly-looking a bunch as I've ever set eyes on. They're Crees. They take the biscuit for ugliness. See that chap? His mouth is so wide that when he opens it the top of his head is an island."

"Nothing of the sort! He's just a darling. He's got a noble forehead and such dreamy eyes. They're positively hypnotic. Looks as if he were brooding fathoms deep over the eternal mystery of existence."

"In other words," said Kennedy, "he's wondering how much bacon, flour and tobacco he can get on credit. These Indians are the pampered wards of our Western civilization. They have all the luxuries that credit can buy."

"It only shows what apt pupils they are," she rejoined.

Presently she darted forward to where a group of squaws were sitting on the steps of a closed bank. One of them had a papoose strapped to her back, the head of the child just showing above the sheath which enclosed its body. The squaw was a stupid looking creature. The baby, fat and dirty, lolled its head and yawned.

"What a dear little baby! How old is it?"

"Four week."

"What sex?"

"No. *Four,* me say."

"Yes, yes. Boy or girl?"

"One leetle squaw."

"What's her name?"

"Kate Frances Julia Kenenny."

"She looks very healthy."

"Um. She all time suck me dry."

Margaret blushed and coughed as she glanced toward Kennedy.

"Is it a namesake of mine you have there?" he inquired of the squaw. "Did I hear you say the name was Kennedy?"

"Naw, Kenenny. You want buy her?"

"I'll buy your baby for this lady if you want to sell it."

"How much you geev?"

The squaw's wide mouth parted in a grin, showing rows of broken yellow teeth.

"Will you take ten dollars for it?"

"No! One thousand, two thousand, three thousand, five million. Finest leetle squaw in Manitoba."

Margaret Pearson was fingering her purse. She extracted a fifty-cent piece and held it out to the squaw.

"Buy something with it for the baby."

"Yah. You want kiss Kate?"

Margaret hesitated. Laddie advanced and sniffed

at the squaw's moccasined feet. Then he turned his tail to her and violently blew air through his nose. Kennedy was shaking with merriment.

"Perhaps the baby doesn't like to have strangers kiss her," ventured Margaret.

"She no care."

The squaw swung the papoose around to her breast.

Margaret stooped and gently touched the child's cheek with her lips. The squaw grinned. Then touching with her finger the spot that Margaret had kissed, she looked up at Kennedy and said, "You want kiss Kate right there? Only cost one dollar."

"Come, let's move on!" pleaded Margaret, blushing furiously.

"No hurry," remarked Kennedy. "We'll see the business through." Then to the squaw he said, "Keep your finger on that spot while I'm getting the dollar!"

He gave her the money and kissed the baby. It was a resounding smack. The baby, hitherto apathetic, smiled and gooed. There were grunts of approval from the group of squaws. The mother of the child glanced around her with a glint in her narrow-slit eyes. Then she turned to Kennedy and said: "Mebbe you like kiss me, too? No charge for that."

The squaw grinned and grunted.

"But that might get me into trouble with your husband," said Kennedy, sparring for wind.

"He no care. But, mebbe fair lady not like you for kiss me."

He coloured slightly, as he rejoined: "To tell you the truth, Mrs. Kenenny, I never kiss other men's wives. It doesn't pay. Good day and good luck!"

Margaret gave him no opportunity to comment upon the incident. To all appearances her interest was immediately absorbed in observing the polyglot of peoples streaming along the street.

"It's a city of all nations," she remarked. "I think it must be the whirligig of the world. Every European country seems to be represented here, from Iceland to Italy."

"Yes, it's the clearing-house for the immigrants. From this point they are distributed all over the West."

"I suppose I'm really an immigrant myself," she replied. "It thrills me to think of it. I feel that I am about to plunge into a great and unknown sea of experience."

"I feel the same way about myself," replied Kennedy.

"Indeed? But, I don't see how that can be. You're not a stranger here. You've been over this ground before. You know the country and its life."

"Nevertheless, I feel new and strange to the country I'm in, and there's a tremendous thrill with it all."

He suggested that they should take a taxi and drive out to Fort Garry. After they had viewed the relics of the ancient trading post, they visited various points of interest in the city and dined at the Fort Garry Hotel. Margaret had her kodak along and was recounting the snap-shots she had taken.

"They'll make an interesting collection. I've but one regret; it's that I didn't snap you when you were kissing the papoose. I must have been wool-gathering when I missed the chance. That group of squaws would have made a lovely setting."

"You'll find plenty of aboriginees to snap on our way to the station."

"All right. But, now I want to get some pictures of Laddie. I want a lot of them. I must have the darling in all his attitudes and poses. Where can we go to get them?"

"I think it had better be done on the station platform. Then the pictures will carry suggestions of our journey."

This was agreed to. Margaret took a dozen snap-shots of the dog and several of Laddie and Kennedy together. While this was going on, they became the centre of a crowd of admiring spectators.

When Margaret had finished, Kennedy said: "Now, I must take a few shots of you and Laddie together. I shall expect you to send me some of them when you get them developed."

He posed them carefully and took half-a-dozen

shots. Then he called Laddie away and took two pictures of Margaret alone.

They got away from Winnipeg in the middle of the afternoon. Margaret rested for a while and Kennedy spent the time in writing. During the evening meal they were both in quiet mood and talked in subdued tones. The sun was bleeding down into the West, leaving its red stains upon the sky and it seemed to Gordon Kennedy that a similar movement was taking place in his own life.

The following day was an uneventful one. There was another visit to Laddie, then a couple of hours during which he led her to talk of England and her life there. When it was time to retire, he said: "I suppose this means good-bye. I leave the train at Calgary at six-thirty in the morning. You'll be sleeping then. This has been a most delightful journey for me. I'll never forget it."

"No, this is not to be good-bye. I'll be up before you leave. I always wake early, and tomorrow morning I shall be keen to get my first view of the Rockies."

The morning proved to be a glorious one. The air was like champagne. They were standing on the rear platform of the train, Kennedy deep in thought, Margaret quivering with excitement and seeming like something ready to mount on wings.

"Oh, look!" she exclaimed. "What a wonderful bank of tinted clouds!"

"Something more substantial than clouds there," replied Kennedy.

"Are they the Rockies?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, they're there, all right, though a good way off, as yet."

Presently she said, "There's certainly something in this air that stirs the sporting instinct in one's blood. I feel as if I should like to start off this very minute on some big, bold adventure."

Gordon leaned forward and looked earnestly into Margaret's face.

"Do you mean that?" he asked in a voice that startled her.

"Yes, that's how I feel."

"Then I'll suggest an adventure, a big and bold one, too. *Break your journey here at Calgary and marry me!*"

The hot blood rushed into her face and for a moment she stared at him in amazement. Then quickly regaining her composure, she smiled and answered lightly: "Thank you! Quite a brilliant idea! What suggested it to you?"

The corners of his mouth twitched humourously as he replied: "A lot of things, particularly the fact that I enjoy having you with me at the breakfast table."

"Is that the acid test of congeniality?" she laughed.

"I think it is one of them. I like your morning

face and your morning moods. They show the right attitude to life."

"You surely flatter me, Mr. Kennedy; but you have scarcely made out a convincing case for impromptu marriage."

"No, perhaps not; but I'm coming to the main point. *I have learned to love you.*"

She looked at him steadily for a moment.

"Am I to take you seriously?" she asked.

"Yes, most surely. I do love you with all my heart. I want you for my wife."

"Today?"

"Yes, if you are willing. It's an adventure, I know, but I believe a safe one for both of us."

"No, it would be nothing of the sort," she replied, heatedly. "It would only be a silly, ill-considered act."

"Well, if you won't marry me now, will you promise to marry me later?"

"How can I promise such a thing? I don't know that I could love you."

He reached out and took her hands in his. "I hope it won't take you long to find out," he said earnestly, "because I'm going to keep on loving you for the rest of my life."

The train had now reached Calgary. The porter was calling to him:

"Ah'll get your stuff out, Cap'n; no need to hurry. Train stops ten minutes."

"What time does my train leave for Mandeville?"

"Not for half an hour, Cap'n."

"Mr. Kennedy, I must send Father a telegram from here," said Margaret. "Will you be good enough to hand it in at the office for me?"

"Most certainly."

He waited while she took her pencil and wrote, "Arrive Vancouver, ten, tomorrow. Glorious journey."

She passed the slip of paper to him, saying: "If you'll be good enough to copy that on to a form and send it I shall be so much obliged to you."

"This isn't enough," he replied; "it needs a few more words. I'll supply them. 'Have met my fate. Expect an early wedding,'" he wrote.

Margaret rippled with laughter as she crossed out his words.

"If you take liberties like that I shall not be able to trust you with it," she said.

"You can trust me—now and always," he replied. "But, when shall I see you again?"

"After you have had your holiday on the ranch. If, at the end of it, you feel as you do now, you may come to see me in Vancouver—21, Garden Terrace. Then . . . *perhaps!* For Laddie's sake. But now, *au revoir,* and good luck!"

He pressed her hands and said: "Good-bye, until we meet in Vancouver."

As the train steamed out of the station, Margaret was choked with excitement and dazed with aston-

ishment. She went to her section and gave herself over to thought. She was amazed at Kennedy and no less amazed at herself. She was thoroughly English. She had never been a creature of impulse, and hitherto had always been deliberate and circumspect in forming her friendships. Could it be possible that she was in love with a man whom she had known only three days? She had found him in rollicking holiday mood and she had played up to that mood until—until when?—*until he took her hands in his.* Now there came a blaze of light, an uncontrollable rush of feeling, and she knew that she had been ushered into the wonderful mysterious kingdom of love.

During the remainder of the journey she talked but little with her fellow-passengers. She was glad to have this first day of love among the mountains They harmonized with her thoughts.

There were moments when it seemed to her that she could feel the mountains inbreathing the pure air of heaven, and other moments when, with summits wreathed in smoky mist, they seemed to breathe forth the incense of silent supplication. So it was with her own soul.

Now the train would hang dizzily over some unsunned canyon, slowly creeping across a bridge which, from a curve in the rear distance had looked no more substantial than a spider's web. Again, the train groaned and wheezed and panted its way up some steep gradient to a mighty glacier over-

topped by heights of snow. At length they came to where, sheltered between wooded heights, the Fraser River flowed, with wigwams and fishermen's huts along its banks, and occasionally an Indian standing in mid-stream to spear the unwary salmon. It was the homely, work-a-day world again, the world of human hopes and hearts and homes.

V

FACING REALITIES

AFTER leaving Calgary, Kennedy had a tedious journey in front of him. The road was rough, the car uncomfortable and smelly, the heat intense. No meals were served and there was nothing to drink except brackish, lukewarm water. Ten minutes were allowed for lunch at Stamer's. Here he got a couple of rank sandwiches and a cup of vile coffee. He was glad when the train reached Mandeville, the station nearest his brother's ranch, which was fourteen miles away.

Jim was there to meet him. He was a towering broad-shouldered man, an inch taller and five years older than his brother.

"Well, here you are!" he cried. "Never mind about your luggage! Peters will take it in the buckboard. I've got a horse for you. Come on! Ah, is this Laddie? Some dog! Will he ride or follow?"

"He'll enjoy the run. Laddie, salute my brother Jim!"

The dog obeyed. Jim loved him from that moment.

Jim threw an arm around Gordon and led him away.

"Good journey?"

"Fine, most of it. Pretty rotten on this line."

"Yes, invalid engines and worn-out coaches. The whole of the rolling stock needs to be scrapped. 'Twill be, presently. The C. N. R. people are going to build a line to link up Tremaine and Mandeville. Been surveyed already. It will run through the southern part of the ranch. They may start work next year. When that line is built it will throw a lot more traffic on to the Mandeville-Calgary end and they'll have to give it a new equipment. Incidentally, it will be a big thing for me. Increase all values thirty per cent. Revolutionize the whole situation. Did you find it hot?"

"The heat found me. I'm a rag."

"Then perhaps you'd better ride in the buckboard with Peters."

"Not on your life!"

"All right. Just as you say. Here's your horse. Call him Larkspur!"

They unhitched the horses and mounted. Just as they were seated the locomotive gave a shriek and Larkspur went up in the air. He reared until it looked as if he would go over on his back. Gordon slipped his feet out of the stirrups. Then grasping the pommel of the saddle with his right hand, he threw his weight forward. Gently and

gracefully Larkspur's forefeet descended until they touched the ground again.

"Neatly done for a tenderfoot! Larkspur will love you for that," said Jim.

"Is he so affectionate?"

"Heart of gold. Best of my bunch."

"How many have you, now?"

"About sixty, counting the broncos. You'll like Larkspur when you get used to him. Easy action, eh?"

"Delightful! Beats a rocking-chair."

They cantered side by side through the cooling evening air, while the light slowly faded and rich scents rose around them from the beating of their horses' feet upon the beflowered grass now wet with dew.

"It's great to have you here again," said Jim. "Four years since your last visit. We've opened up a lot of country since then."

"It's fine to be here, Jim. I'm going to have a good time."

After their late supper that night they sat for an hour on the west verandah of the bungalow facing a ridge of the Rockies, faintly outlined against the sky.

"Gordon," said Jim, "I believe this life would suit you."

"It's certainly a fine life. You're getting things into good shape here. This is a charming bungalow."

"Best in Alberta, I'm told. Plenty of room in it, isn't there?"

"Surprisingly roomy. You could do with a big family here."

"Some different from the shack thing I had when you were out here before, eh?"

"I should say so. It's delightful. But what surprises me most is your music-room. I never dreamed of finding the like of that in an Alberta bungalow."

"A little fad of mine. I like music, you know. The men like it, too. They often sprawl on the verandahs in the evening and smoke their pipes while I strum on the piano. They seem equally fond of sacred music and the ragtime stuff. They're great boys."

"They've certainly got a great boss," replied Gordon.

Presently Jim said: "I wish you'd join me out here for good and all. Why not chuck your sky-piloting and link up with real life?"

Gordon smiled.

"The West has properly got you, hasn't it?"

"Sure thing! Got me through and through and for keeps. This is God's country and it offers a man the fullest and freest life that can be lived on earth."

"Of course you can't expect me to feel just as you do about that. A man's life is with his work and my work lies elsewhere."

"Look here, Gordon! I'd like to ask you something. Just what are you driving at in your work among these pleasant people in Rosemount? Have you a definite objective? Some target you're trying to hit?"

"Of course I have a target. I want to build and consolidate a great church."

"In other words, you want to get a lot of people together under one roof for the purpose of enjoying sacred music and listening to prayers and sermons. Is that a man's job? Is it a life-work for a fellow with guts in him?"

Gordon laughed. Then he fell into silence.

"You put the thing down on much too low a level," he said after a while. "The matters you mention are only means to an end."

"What end?"

"The betterment of the people, of course."

"In what way?"

"By lifting up their aspirations. By bringing them into touch with the Almighty."

"Have you anything in your mind that you want them to do? I mean anything real, practical, costly? Anything for the direct and immediate improvement of human conditions?"

"I'm not a social reformer, Jim. I'm a preacher of religion. I try to give good impulses to the people."

"Leaving the people to work those impulses out, or perhaps to let them die out?"

"I suppose that *is* the situation. What more can I do? I can't perform another man's duty for him or live his life for him."

"You preach, expecting him to practise, and count that a fair division of labour, eh?"

"Not exactly. I try to practise what I preach."

The brother lapsed into silence again, then Jim said, "I suppose you have some sinners among your people at Rosemount?"

"Sure! They're all sinners," replied Gordon.

"Do any of them ever repent?"

Gordon looked serious. "I don't know that they often do," he replied.

"Well, isn't that the real test? Do the people need preachers to tell them of their duty? Don't they know it right well? What they need is to be stirred up to do it. When a man quits his meanness and his slacking and stands up to duty, I guess that's repentance; what do you say?"

"Good theology."

"No theology at all; just plain horse sense."

"It's the truth anyhow; but the preacher's job is to strengthen the *motive* for standing up to duty."

"Does the prodigal son ever come your way?" Jim asked presently—"the fellow who's ragged, dirty, hungry, who wants to get home? Ever meet any girls gone wrong and tobogganing to hell on drink and drugs?"

"Not much of that thing has come my way yet."

"Well, I guess there's some of 'em in Toronto,

and like enough in Rosemount. I know we have 'em in the western towns. But, come on! It's late. We must get to bed."

Gordon rose and stretched his arms.

"Strikes me you should have been the preacher, Jim."

"And you the ranchman?"

"Guess you think I'd do better as a play actor."

Jim put his hand affectionately on his brother's shoulder.

"I think nothing of the sort, boy. But I want to know that you're doing a real man's work. I want to see you get bang up against reality while the going's good."

VI

A WELCOME LETTER

GORDON KENNEDY entered with zest into the life of the ranch. He accompanied Jim on his rounds of cattle inspection. He spent days with the men, practising with the lasso and learning the technique of the cow-puncher's art. At the end of a fortnight he was hard as nails and fit for any work around the place.

During these days he found himself steadily growing in his admiration for Jim. He was amazed at the breadth of his mind and impressed by his moral earnestness. He knew that the touch of cynicism in his talk was merely his method of cutting in to the core of things. Gordon liked to watch Jim's face as he warmed to a discussion. It was a study. At the end of each sentence the corners of his mouth curled curiously upward into the deep furrows of his lean cheeks. Strangers were often puzzled to interpret this facial movement. One would regard it as quizzical, the action seeming to convert his cheeks into a pair of animated interrogation points. Another would see in it a sign of suppressed humour, a sort of smothered smile.

In one of their evening chats the conversation turned upon the rapid growth of Canadian cities.

"Growing too fast," said Jim. "This young Dominion is already top-heavy with cities. And who are the people that crowd into them? Doctors, lawyers, preachers, stockbrokers, real estate gamblers, company promoters, life insurance agents, booze purveyors, photographers, barbers, newspaper reporters, actors and actresses, . . ."

"Hold on, Jim! You mustn't put all that lot in the same category."

Jim puffed at his pipe and looked at Gordon in a challenging way.

"Who says category? I've only mentioned a few occupations of city-folk. I recognize the fact that some of them are less harmful than others."

"Degrees of guilt, eh?"

"Sure. I wouldn't put doctors on the same level with bootleggers, even though they both deal out dope. But, joking aside, isn't it a fact that most city folks are non-producers? They live by suction. They do nothing for the products of the country except to manhandle them and increase their cost. It's an unwholesome state of affairs. We must get more people on the land, develop our manufacturing resources and work up a world-wide trade."

He occupied himself with his pipe for awhile, then he said, "Gordon, I wish you'd seriously

consider the idea of coming into partnership with me. There would be a fortune for you in a few years, as things are going now. I'd give you a good lay."

"Thanks, old-timer! But I can't quit my own job. Conscience won't allow it, nor inclination. Anything else than preaching could never be more than a second best for me. But say, Jim, you need a wife for a partner. When are you going to get married?"

"Never."

"Why not?"

"Can't do it. I'm out of the running."

"Bunkum! You're a man for a woman to worship."

"Not likely. But, in any case, I wouldn't want worship. I'd want companionship."

"Well, get it! It won't take you long."

A grave look, tinged with sadness, crept into Jim's eyes. He spoke slowly and with deep feeling.

"No; it can't be done—until I forget Jeanette, and that will never happen."

Gordon's voice sank to a whisper as he said: "I knew her death was a terrible blow for you, but I've been hoping you'd recover."

"I've recovered, all right, for everything except marriage. But, what about yourself? Time *you* got fixed up. Should have plenty of chances back there in Rosemount."

"Nothing doing in that direction. But I hope there's something brewing over yonder."

He pointed to the West.

"Go on with it!"

"Well, I'm waiting for the answer to a letter. It was addressed to Vancouver. She's English. Met her on the train coming out."

"In love?"

"Sure thing."

"Bang into it?"

"Up to the neck."

"Not deep enough, my boy. It must include your understanding and judgment. You need to be all under, head and heels."

"Well, so I am. I tell you, that girl has got everything—beauty, brains, character, depth of feeling and the right attitude to life."

"Religious?"

"Enough for me. She's got as much religion as I have."

"That's not enough to meet requirements. She needs to have more religion than you've got. But it strikes me you're rushing things along at a great pace. Hope you're not making any mistake."

"Rest easy, Jim! I'm making no mistake."

One morning, at breakfast, Jim asked: "How are you getting on with Larkspur? Some horse, isn't he?"

"Never a better went on four feet. He's cheer-

ful, reliable, plucky and has a mouth of velvet. No mean tricks. Carry you all day and all night and never a grumble out of him."

"I thought you'd like him. He's the sort of horse Henry Ward Beecher said he'd like to have for a church member."

"If I had him at Rosemount I'd make a deacon of him. But what's the programme for today?"

"Well, it looks like rain. I think we'll be branding some of the young stock over by Blue Ridge. If you're not keen on that, how would it do for you to ride into Pickford, post my letters and fetch the mail?"

"Right! I can do with a nice pleasant letter myself."

"Seems to me you must have had a lot of pleasant letters since you struck the ranch," remarked Jim, dryly.

"All from the East, as yet, Jim, and they don't count."

Pickford was seven miles from the ranch. When half the distance had been covered it began to rain. The landscape was blotted out; no more outlook than in the steam-room of a Turkish bath. But at Pickford he got the letter he was wanting. Margaret Pearson would be pleased to see him whenever he cared to come. It was a brief note, but it gave him landscape and horizon.

Mandeville, the nearest telegraph station, was

another seven miles farther on. The rain had now become a lashing storm.

"Sorry for you, Larkspur," said Kennedy, patting his horse's neck, "but I must ask you to do it. Smell that!"

Larkspur sniffed the letter, then snorted, pawed the ground and reared.

"Thanks, old chap! You're a pal."

Away they went through the pelting rain and deepening mud to Mandeville. From there he sent a telegram.

"Arrive Vancouver Saturday."

This was Wednesday. He must leave the ranch next morning in order to make connections. He remained two hours in Mandeville, since both he and Larkspur were in need of food and rest. The rain continued to come down in torrents. Long before he got back to the bungalow he was soaked to the skin. Jim was on the lookout for him, wondering what had kept him so long. A glance at Larkspur was sufficient to tell him that the ride had extended far beyond Pickford.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, as Gordon sprang from the saddle and Larkspur stood in a cloud of steam, "you've had some ride! I see you've been to Mandeville."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, judging by the marks, you've been through Red Bottom, and that's within two miles of Mandeville. Dirty day for that ride."

"I call it a perfectly beautiful day. Finest day I ever saw in Alberta."

Saying this he handed Jim a packet of letters and hurled a wet bundle of papers toward the bungalow door.

"Thanks! It sounds as if you got your nice pleasant letter."

"You bet I did! I thought it deserved an immediate reply by wire. Larkspur has been great all day."

"Well, make a bee line for your room and strip! Water and towels all ready. I'll look after Larkspur."

"I'd like to see him comfortable, Jim, before I change."

"Vamoose! No back talk! Get into dry togs!"

Jim led the horse to the stable, threw off his bridle and saddle and rubbed him vigorously with soft woollen cloths from nose to heel. He had just turned him into his loose box when Gordon appeared upon the scene.

"I say," he cried, "Larkspur looks quite happy. He's a beautiful creature!"

He went into the box, stroked Larkspur's nose and patted his neck.

"Gordon," said Jim, "I reckon if I should peel your skin off, I'd find a ranchman underneath."

Gordon smiled, but made no reply.

"Seems a pity to spoil nature's good work," continued Jim. "Darn shame, I call it."

"Look here, Jim, if you keep harping on that string I'll think you have a rotten opinion of me."

"How's that?"

"Well, I've been trying to make you understand that while this life appeals to my sporting blood, my own work has got me by the conscience. You give me no credit for that."

Jim's lips began their quizzical humorous movements.

"Tricky thing, conscience, isn't it?" he queried.

"Certainly not. Most reliable thing in the world. It gives you the trail."

"Didn't know it. Always thought it was a man's intelligence that did it."

Larkspur now had his nose in the feed-rack and was blowing and whinnying.

"Easy there, Larkspur," said Jim, "you're too warm for your oats just yet."

Then he looked at Gordon and waited for him to speak.

"Listen, Jim, I want to tell you that conscience includes intelligence. It *is* intelligence, plus a moral urge."

Jim's eyes twinkled.

"Sounds very learned, and all that." Then turning to the horse he said: "No use urging, old boy! You can't have your oats for another half hour. Your intelligence is at fault in asking for 'em."

"Blow you, Jim! What are you up to?" said Gordon.

"Larkspur is a fine horse, as horses go," Jim answered, in a drawling tone, "but he doesn't understand the principles of hygiene. That makes his urge for those oats a mischievous and bad urge. See?"

"You've no right to bring Larkspur into the argument. It isn't playing the game. Not fair to him nor to me," replied Gordon.

"I don't see it that way. Explain!"

"Why, it's just Larkspur's belly that calls for those oats. That's all there is to it. He wants them. His hunger is his urge. He has no regard for any consequences except to get his belly filled. He isn't acting upon intelligence. He isn't thinking at all."

"Isn't he, though? I reckon he's thinking hard. Knows there's oats around here, doesn't he?"

"Go on!" said Gordon. "Spin your web!"

"So, then," resumed Jim, "there's his intelligence. He knows the oats are here and he knows he wants them. What he *doesn't* know is, that they'll likely hurt him if I give them to him while he's hot. That is to say, both his intelligence and his ignorance—especially his ignorance—are factors in his urge."

"Now for the application," said Gordon.

Jim deliberately pulled out his pipe and lit it. When it was going well, he said: "I guess it's

plain enough that a fellow's conscience, or his moral urge, as you call it, may get him into heaps of trouble. If it includes his knowledge, it also includes his ignorance, which is a darn sight bigger proposition. That's where the trouble comes in."

"Jim Kennedy, you're a sophist," said Gordon with a laugh as he departed for the bungalow.

Half an hour later the two men were facing each other at the tea table. Jim lifted the teapot, then suddenly put it down again.

"Excuse me a minute! I must give Larkspur his oats," he said. "He's waited for them long enough."

He was soon back.

"Did Larkspur say anything?" asked Gordon.

"Yes. He said, 'My best thanks to you, Jim Kennedy!' Larkspur has a sweet disposition. Now, what about that letter?"

"It says I may go and see her any time I like. I'm off for Vancouver tomorrow."

"How long will you be gone?"

"Perhaps a week."

"Cuts a big slice out of your time here. It's all too short, anyway. However, you mustn't mind me. I suppose if that girl is available, as no doubt she is, you'll marry her, eh?"

"Sure thing. I'll marry her straight away and take her back to Toronto with me."

Jim tapped his fingers on the table. His face wore an anxious look.

"I hope you're not making any mistake, Gordon. You're thirty years old. You ought to know your road in a love affair."

"I think I do, Jim."

Nothing more was said for a few moments. Then Jim remarked: "Of course you realize that you're working largely in the dark."

"Not at all. I'm working in the light."

"Do you know anything about her father?"

"Not much. But I'm not marrying *him.*"

"Gordon, when a fellow's in love he is always ready to say some such fool thing as that. Now, the fact is, in marrying a girl you *do* marry her parents and perhaps several of her grandparents as well. You're sufficiently acquainted with the doctrine of heredity to appreciate that. What if there should be insanity in the family?"

"For heaven's sake, don't conjure up such hideous spectres!"

"They'll come without being conjured up if they happen to be lurking about in the background. I don't want to distress you, my boy; on the other hand, I don't want to see you let in for big troubles. Remember, the situation isn't the same as if you knew her family history."

"True, but when I'm eating a 'number one' apple, I'm warranted in believing it grew on a good tree, even if I never saw the tree."

"For a man of your profession, your arguments are surprisingly superficial. Now, your apple may

look all right and taste all right and yet carry a bad taint in the seed. It may be good enough to eat and yet entirely unsatisfactory for reproductive purposes. The vice of the old tree communicates itself to the seed of the fruit."

"Look here, Jim, I've met her aunt and I'm going to meet her father. I shall have my eyes open and my ears, too."

"But you'll commit yourself to the girl before ever you see her father. You'll leap into an engagement, neck over crop. Now, really, do you know anything about the old boy?"

"Margaret told me he was interested in the timber trade."

"Let's look him up in Bradstreet!"

Jim went to his book-shelves, took down a hefty volume and began rapidly turning the leaves.

"Yes, I think we have him here. 'Arthur James Pearson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Pacific Timber Milling Company. Rated at forty thousand. Credit, O. K.' Looks all right as far as it goes."

"You may be sure everything is all right, Jim."

"I hope so, Gordon. Perhaps I'm overanxious, where you are concerned."

VII

THE ENGAGEMENT

GORDON left for Vancouver on the following day. Within an hour of his arrival in the city he was ringing the door-bell at 21, Crescent Gardens. It was an attractive-looking house of medium size, standing on a slope which commanded a fine view of Burrard Inlet. In response to his ring, a middle-aged and pleasant-mannered woman, evidently the housekeeper, came to the door. He gave his name, handed her his card and asked if he might see Miss Pearson?

"Please come in! Miss Pearson isn't in at the moment, but she'll be back presently."

Having led the way to the reception room, she asked: "Is Miss Pearson expecting you?"

"Yes, sometime today, but she didn't know what time I should arrive."

"She will be in at eleven," the housekeeper replied, glancing at the clock. "I always make her coffee at that time."

It was now five minutes to eleven.

The room into which Gordon had been ushered seemed to beam with welcomes. It was decorated in yellow, a colour which harmonized with the

polished, hardwood floor. The pictures were Bell-Smith scenes among the Rockies—done in flaming colours. On the table stood a bowl of roses. A flood of sunlight poured in through the wide, south window. Truly a golden room, he thought.

So this was her setting! Had she found this room, just as it appeared now, awaiting her arrival? Or did it reflect her own tastes and preferences? He felt certain her own radiant spirit had touched it into this golden beauty.

Presently he heard a quick step in the hallway. The door opened and Margaret appeared. She was wearing a simple morning dress of pale green linen.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here to receive you," she said rapidly. "I didn't think you could get here quite so soon. I was just over in the next street speaking with Mrs. Silcox. You're looking well. How do you like ranch life? You look as if it suited you. Did you have a good journey? How's Laddie?"

For a moment he made no reply, but simply stood there holding her hand and looking into her face. Then his lips parted in a slow smile.

"Babbler!" he ejaculated.

She rippled out in laughter.

"Margaret, there's only one question worth asking at this moment, and it's for me to ask it. Do you love me?"

There came a tap at the door. It was the housekeeper with the coffee.

"Pshaw!" muttered Kennedy.

Margaret quickly withdrew her hand from his and hastened to take the tray.

"I think you prefer it black, don't you?" she queried, as she seated herself and prepared to pour the coffee.

He strode to the table and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Margaret Pearson, leave that coffe-pot alone until you've answered my question! I asked, 'Do you love me?'"

She turned to him. Her eyes gave the desired answer.

Drawing her gently toward him, he held her close while his lips found hers.

"Sweetheart, I knew you wouldn't let me come here to be disappointed," he murmured.

"You bet your life on it, didn't you?" she whispered.

"I did."

"You've taken enormous risks; you know so little about me. You're a reckless gambler. But I hope you won't be disappointed, and lose on this throw."

For answer he kissed her forehead, her eyes and her lips.

"You must have known that morning at Calgary that I was loving you," she murmured.

"But *you* didn't know it; you said so," he replied.

"Yes, and the next moment I *did* know. Strange, wasn't it? The very next moment I knew that I was incurably in love with you. But let's sit down! The coffee will get cold."

As she handed him a cup of coffee, he leaned toward her and said: "Margaret, the next move is to fix the date for our wedding!"

"What an impetuous man you are! There will be plenty of time to think about that a year from now."

"Nothing of the sort. We must decide upon the date at once. We've got to be in Toronto by the end of September, and we shall want at least a fortnight for our honeymoon."

She smiled at his eagerness.

"Don't be absurd!" she replied. "This is almost on a par with the Calgary proposition. Let's talk sense! What would your people think of you if you went back with a wife whom you had met for the first time less than three months before? What would they think of me?"

"They would congratulate us. What else would they do? They like their minister to be enterprising and to get things done."

"But have you thought about Father? I'm sure you don't want to be unkind to him."

"He won't object. I know he'll find it hard to part with you, but no harder, now, than in a year's time."

Gordon's prediction proved to be a true one.

The two men were immediately attracted to each other. Pearson was genial and fatherly. Kennedy summed him up as a good type of the English gentleman and man of affairs.

"I know it's asking a lot, Mr. Pearson," he said, "yet I'm going to urge an early wedding —not later than the middle of September. I cannot extend my holiday and it is impossible to think of going back without Margaret. My heart would be here instead of in Toronto."

"It does look a little hurried," said Pearson, "but I see how important it is that you should get settled as soon as possible. I naturally have some sentiment about it. Margaret has brought a lot of sunshine into my life since she came out here."

"It's cruel robbery, I know, to take her away. A man in love is always a brigand. But I hope my proposal does not involve any permanent disturbance of your plans."

"No. As a matter of fact, I may tell you—in confidence, if I may—I'm rather unsettled about my movements for the near future. There's likely to be a radical change in our business here. In a few months' time I may be taking another position, perhaps in Seattle or Spokane. In view of that possibility I have this house on monthly rental. The idea of Margaret being happily settled will be a comfort to me, though I shall miss her terribly."

"I shall certainly do my best to make her happy, Mr. Pearson."

"I've no doubt of it. And, do you know, you pay us a great compliment in taking us so entirely on trust."

"I'm perfectly satisfied, sir. I'm sure if there were any real barrier to our marriage you'd mention it."

"I certainly would. There is no hindrance of any sort. Margaret comes of good sound stock. Her mother died of pneumonia, following upon typhoid fever contracted on a continental holiday. My father was a gentleman farmer. My wife's father, Sir James Maxton, is still living at Killcross, Essex. He's eighty-four, a retired merchant, and wealthy. Margaret is his only grandchild. She will come in for a good deal of money at his death. If my own schemes carry through, there'll be another snug little fortune for her when I step out."

Kennedy showed considerable embarrassment. His face flushed.

"Believe me, Mr. Pearson, I hadn't the faintest idea that Margaret was an heiress. It has never been my wish to marry money. I can assure you her money will be her own. Unless misfortune overtakes me, my income will be sufficient for us to live on in the quiet way becoming to a minister."

"Exactly! Quite so. But it's a satisfaction to me that you and Margaret will have easy going as far as finances are concerned. She brought two thousand pounds with her from England which

she inherited from her mother. I've invested it for her. Unfortunately, it can't be withdrawn without a few months' notice. But that's a detail."

"I'm rather pleased than otherwise to know that her money is tied up at present. I want to start on my own and carry on in that way, too. My salary is six thousand dollars a year and I have five thousand in savings. I feel sure Margaret will be content to share things with me as they are."

"Yes, yes. More than content. Her tastes are simple. She cares nothing for luxury. She'll make you a good wife. I don't know that she's a particularly pious girl, but she has sound principles and she's out to do all the good she can in the world."

At first Margaret seemed a little disappointed that her father so readily agreed to an early wedding. She believed he would insist upon having it put off until Spring, at least. Perhaps her coming had meant less to him than she had thought. She hinted at this in a delicate way and then immediately regretted it. A look of pain come into his face.

"My dear, you don't understand," her father said quietly. "My happiness must consist in seeing you happy. It would distress me to know that you were permitting my comfort to stand between you and Gordon. Much as I should love to have you with me always, I know that the best and happiest thing for all concerned is to give you to him

in marriage. If you weren't thinking of me you wouldn't hesitate a moment in doing just what he wishes."

He knew by her deepened colour that he had gauged the situation correctly. "And it isn't as if Gordon would be near you during the time of waiting," he went on to say. "He would be more than two thousand miles away."

She put her arms round his neck and kissed him. "Father, you're a dear!"

The wedding was fixed for the tenth of September. Kennedy wished the honeymoon to include a week in the Rockies—at Field, Glacier and Banff—and then a week on Jim's ranch. This would leave them sufficient time to reach Toronto in readiness for the first Sunday in October.

Margaret was filled with excitement as Gordon outlined his plans.

"You sweep me off my feet," she said. "You're a human whirlwind. But it's all delightful. I think I shall enjoy the ranch better than anything else. Are you quite sure it will be convenient for Jim to have us?"

"Certainly. And I'm quite sure he'd shoot us if we didn't go. You'll love Jim. He's the best that ever was."

"What a life you're opening to me! When I try to imagine it all, I feel overwhelmed."

"But not dismayed?"

"How could I be, with you?"

"Well, it's a big and bold adventure," he replied.

"Do you think your people will be prejudiced against me on account of being English?" she asked.

"On the contrary, they'll appreciate the touch of distinction it gives you. They'll soon discover your sympathy with our Canadian life and they'll take you to their hearts."

"I hope they'll like me, for your sake. I want to enter into all your life, all your interests, all your work—every bit of it. I don't want to be coddled or pampered. I want to stand by you and with you, and work. I'm to be your pal. There's lots I'll need to learn about the duties of a minister's wife, but you'll help me to learn them quickly."

"And yet you talked about putting off our wedding for a year!"

"It was my conscience that was talking that way, not my heart. I was thinking of my duty to Father. But he has made everything so easy for me. Hasn't he been splendid?"

"Indeed he has."

As they talked together it seemed to him that every turn of her thoughts disclosed some new beauty of soul. When at length it was time for him to leave and go to his hotel for the night, he said: "Margaret, it's great when one can revere the girl he's about to marry as I revere you. It

puts a solid foundation under the whole structure of married life."

"Thank you! I shall never forget that good word. But you do give me a lot to live up to."

It was Saturday when Kennedy arrived in Vancouver. On Sunday evening he, together with the Pearsons, dined with the Silcoxes. To his surprise, Kennedy learned that Silcox was acquainted with Jim. He had met him in Edmonton. Silcox had spent a good deal of time there in connection with a building contract.

"It isn't likely he will remember me. I sat next to him at a banquet given by the Mayor when the big bridge was opened for traffic. I was impressed by his conversation. He should be a statesman."

Gordon's face glowed with pleasure.

"Jim is not the sort for politics, he's too soft-hearted. He'd want to carry every lame dog on his back. He backed me many a mile when I was a kid."

The Silcox home was spacious and excellently appointed. Silcox had prospered, especially of late years. He took big contracts for bridge and railway building and was reputed to be one of the most successful men in the business. In the course of the evening he chanced to mention that he planned to retire before long. He had hesitated about taking the step through fear of growing

stale. He dreaded stagnation. If he could hit upon something worth while to take up his time he would soon wind up his business.

"I wish you could meet Jim," said Kennedy.

"Will he be coming out to the wedding?"

"I fear he won't be able to. He is always very busy and I know he has important engagements coming on about that time. His great friend, Al. Hobart, of Montreal, will be visiting him then, and that will keep him home."

On Tuesday morning Gordon left for the ranch. Jim met him at Mandeville. He was riding Gipsy Queen and leading Larkspur.

"Well, what about it, boy?"

"September the tenth. She was for waiting a year on her father's account, but he sided with me. He's a good sort. They seem to be a substantial family. Silcox, the aunt's husband, is a wealthy contractor. He met you at a banquet in Edmonton."

"I remember Silcox quite well and I know quite a lot about his work. First-class man. I'll plan to get into touch with him. So you're quite satisfied with everything?"

"More than satisfied. No disillusionments of any sort. Margaret was more charming than ever. I think it needs the background of a home to bring out the full glory of a good woman. I found my respect and admiration for her increasing every

hour. She's a glory, Jim. You'll be pleased with her."

"Of course I shall. It isn't probable you've side-stepped from all the attractive girls that came your way in Toronto to take up with a dud at this stage of the game."

"Do you think you'll be able to come to the wedding?"

"I'm afraid not. Hobart will be here, then. Is it to be a swell affair?"

"No, a very simple and quiet one. Unless you come along, the Silcoxes will be the only guests. I've told them that you'd be expecting us to visit you, here, on our way to Toronto. That's right, isn't it?"

"Sure thing! I say, that was decent of you. You think she won't mind the knocking about it takes to get here?"

"Not at all; she's a sport."

"Does she ride?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll give her Molly Bawn for a wedding present. She's half-sister to Larkspur and just the right mount for a lady. Gentle as a lamb. Larkspur is yours. I'll put the pair of them down for you in Toronto, with new outfits."

"No, Jim, nothing like that. My salary won't run to the upkeep of two riding horses."

"Leave that to me!"

"You're mighty generous, but 'twould never do.

A minister keeping his pair! It would create a scandal in church circles."

"Not at all. You'll be needing something with a flavour of the ranch to take the taste of preaching out of your mouth on Monday mornings."

VIII

A STAMPEDE AND OTHER MATTERS

THEY were riding along at an easy canter when Jim suddenly drew rein and cried, "Whoa, girl!"

"What's wrong?" asked Gordon.

"Look there!" replied Jim, as he pointed to a dark moving mass about a mile in front of them.

"It's a stampede, and they're coming this way. Our own cattle, without a doubt. Unless we can check them before they go further, it will take weeks to collect them together again, and we shan't get them all, then. It makes the dickens of a mess for us when they start off like this. We never know when it's going to happen. Two or three steers suddenly go crazy and lead off the whole herd."

"What can we do?"

"Stop 'em, of course."

"But how? They'll make mincemeat of us in a minute if we ride into them."

"Sure thing! But if we bring down the leaders, we break the stampede. Here, take this!"

Jim handed Gordon a six-barrelled, thirty-two calibre revolver. Then he gathered up his lasso.

"I'll rope the leading fury while you pump bullets into the others."

It was a herd of two thousand cattle gone mad—a billowing sea of undulating backs, tossing horns and waving tails. They were running at a terrific pace. The pounding of their feet on the prairie raised a dull ominous sound like the rolling of distant thunder. On they came, plunging, heaving, bellowing.

"Jove!" exclaimed Gordon, "it's the limit! The Gadarene swine weren't in it with this bunch!"

"They're hades with the lid off," said Jim. The insane creatures were dashing on in a cloud of steam. They had heard the call of the wild, a summons from the abyss of nature bidding them leave the haunts of man to hide themselves in some distant vast where all was prairie grass and sky. It was a tidal wave of foaming bovine madness.

As the herd drew near, Jim braced himself in his stirrups and set his jaw.

"Now, for it! We'll ride abreast of them for a way, till I pick out the ring-leaders. Ah, that big red demon is the satan of the gang. I'll fetch him down while you plug that brindle brute behind him. Shoot low! Aim for his legs!"

They raced along beside the herd for a while; then Jim's lasso whistled through the air. At the same time the revolver began to speak. They rode on for some distance while Jim gradually checked

the steer and then, responding to a word from her rider and a touch upon her bridle, Gipsy Queen stood stock still with her four legs planted wide apart.

Down came the roped steer, rolling over upon his side. Close behind him staggered the brindle and a moment later crumpled up in a quivering heap. The herd swerved and slackened speed. Then gradually it broke formation, scattered itself over the prairie, and came to a standstill.

Up came the cowboys on their panting ponies to station themselves at points of vantage for keeping the cattle under control. Jim called to Ferguson, his foreman, and gave his orders in a few crisp sentences.

"Lucky we happened to meet 'em," he said, as he prepared to move away.

"Guess it was worth a few thousand, Guv'nor," replied Ferguson. "A lot of 'em would only have been fit for leather in another hour or so. 'Tain't as if they was lean. They're fat as butter and they'd have busted the hearts out of 'em."

As they jogged on towards the bungalow Jim asked: "Do you believe that human beings get possessed of the devil nowadays?"

"It looks like it, sometimes. Why do you ask?"

"If you lived in the West, you'd know. We get some strange characters out here. There's my man Evans, for instance—Davie Evans. He's the quietest and best-natured fellow on the ranch for

the greater part of the time; but occasionally he breaks out into fits of downright hellishness."

"Temporary insanity?" asked Gordon.

"Attacks of the devil, I'd say. He becomes a demon. Gets wild for booze. He'll do anything—steal a horse, kill a man or burn down a house for the sake of a drink. He says so. And, do you know, he's a university graduate and a fine Greek scholar? He started out in life with the idea of becoming a minister. I couldn't keep him here at all if it were not for Ferguson, the foreman. Ferguson was with the Royal Mounted for some years and knows every whiskey dive in Alberta. Twice he went after Evans and brought him back—once from Calgary and once from Edmonton. He's trying a new method of treatment, now, that he hopes may cure him."

"What's the method?"

"Guess I'll leave you to find it out for yourself. You may possibly see it applied before you leave. If not, either Davie or Fergy will tell you about it."

Hobart arrived on the third of September. He was a short, deep-chested man with a bald head and a florid, clean-shaven face.

"Howdy, Jim! Been some summer, hasn't it? Given us a chance to sweat some of the sin out of us. So this is Gordon, eh? Ha, ha! I wonder what Rosemount would think of him in that rig.

Dashed becoming, all the same! Enjoying the life, Gordon?"

"Immensely! Great line of goods, this!"

"He's high-cockaloram among the men, Al," put in Jim. "They took to him from the first; but he completely conquered their hearts a fortnight ago by a little exhibition he gave."

"What sort of exhibition?"

"A six-round go with the gloves against Arizona Joe. Ferguson was time-keeper and Davie Evans referee. Joe claimed that he had been the champion boxer of the southwest country before he came up here. It was a draw up to the end of the fifth; but in the last round the boy, here, put it all over him and practically knocked him out."

Hobart slapped Gordon on the back. "That's the stuff to give 'em! Say, I'll come and hear you preach the next time I'm in Toronto."

Gordon laughed.

"Joe was never any champion," he said. "He's a very ordinary boxer—slow and awkward with his right. It wasn't much of a show. We were both out of practice, too, but the men enjoyed it."

At supper that evening Jim asked Hobart about his holiday ramblings.

"The time of my life," replied Hobart. "Never had anything like it! A rose without a thorn. I've been all over the lot, from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. Started in with a week's visit to my native heath—the Nova Scotia

village where I was born. Tell you what it is. A native heath keeps its grip on you, and its a grip that tightens as the years go by. Wonderful feeling you have for the few old boys that are left at home. Every one of them is an old pal. He may only be an Indian or a coloured fellow to whom we scarcely spoke when we were boys; he may be the chap we hated and fought; he may be a moth-eaten nobody who simply clings to the old habitat like a limpet to its rock. But he's hail-fellow-well-met and a cherished friend when one comes across him away down yonder in the homeland."

"Ecstatic, as usual!" said Jim.

"Well, didn't we knock about together in the summertime when we were barefooted boys in overalls? Didn't we fish and swim and tread logs in the same river? Didn't we steal apples from the same orchards? Weren't we licked by the same schoolmasters and consigned to the gallows by the same old sewing-meeting gossips? I guess those things count for something."

"Get any sport?" asked Gordon.

"One day's fishing only. Great season for salmon. The Mersey and the Medway are full of them. But my luck was out. Hooked one chap and lost him after playing him for five minutes. Beauty he was, too. Felt mighty sorry to lose him. He weighed twelve pounds, seven ounces and a half."

Gordon looked up in surprise.

"How can you be so exact about his weight if you didn't land him?" he asked.

"Noted the scales on his back, of course," replied Hobart solemnly.

"Blow it! What a simpleton I am!" laughed Gordon.

"That's Hobart's favourite," put in Jim. "It's a far-travelled pilgrim but still spry on its feet."

Presently Jim said: "Gordon will be leaving us in a day or so."

"The deuce he will," replied Hobart. "I understood he was to stay until the end of September. What do you mean, you young rascal, by running away as soon as I come? Some urgent call to Toronto? Some one wanting to get married and no one competent to do the job except the dear pastor, eh?"

Jim exploded with laughter and Gordon joined in.

"You've hit the nail pretty nearly on the head," laughed Jim. Then turning to Gordon, he said, "Shall I tell him how the land lies?"

"You may as well."

Hobart's eyes twinkled. "He's going to be married himself, eh?"

"Right—first guess," said Gordon.

"Well, hearty congratulations! It's time some of us began to get in line for posterity. We keep on blathering about the need of population and yet we're all the while leaving the matter for

other people to look after. I'm glad to see evidence of practical patriotism. Now, Gordon, don't tell me that you weren't actuated by pure love of country!"

Gordon grinned.

"It's a case of mixed motives," he replied.

"Shocking! 'Breathes there a man with soul so dead!' But who's the happy lady?"

"An English girl—a Miss Pearson. Just over from the old country. Met her on the train coming out here. She was on her way to join her father in Vancouver."

"Swift work! *She* came—*you* saw—both conquered, eh?"

"I guess that just about sums it up," replied Gordon.

Hobart's visit to the ranch was prompted by something more than his wish to confer with Jim. Though a talkative, even somewhat loquacious man in social circles, no one could be more discreet when dealing with important and delicate matters. His business friends said that Al. Hobart could talk till the cows came home, if it suited him, or he could hold his tongue in seven different languages when it was a case of silence being golden. On this occasion he lived up to his reputation in both these respects. Having been entrusted with a confidential mission to Gordon, he deemed it wise not to disclose the matter to Jim.

A favourable opportunity for a private talk with Gordon soon presented itself, and Hobart opened up.

"You've been at Memorial Church three years, haven't you?"

"That is so."

"I understand it's your first and only pastorate?"

"Yes, I went there direct from college. The people took a big risk, and they've been mighty good to me."

"Undoubtedly: and I guess, from all accounts, you've been mighty good to them. Have you thought of the possibility, or desirability, of making a change?"

"No, not seriously or definitely, as yet. Of course, I don't take it for granted that I shall spend the rest of my life at Rosemount."

"You've been offered some pretty strong inducements to move during the last twelve months, haven't you?"

"The inducements might be considered fairly strong in some respects—not in all."

"But, what if another church—an outstanding one—wanted to talk to you, would you listen? In a word, are you movable?"

"I don't think so. Not just now. What have you in mind?"

"The Metropolitan in Montreal. I reckon it's just about at the top of the heap; the most influ-

ential Protestant church in Canada. Take it from me, its people are keen to have you."

Gordon's face flushed.

"Oh, I don't think that can be quite correct. I've never been in touch with them at all."

"But they've been in touch with you. Two committees from that church heard you at Rosemount during June. You couldn't spot them. They came on different Sundays. Three men each time. They weren't seen together. They sat in different parts of the building. Guess you never heard about it."

"Not a word."

"Don't remember seeing anyone in your congregation that looked like me, do you?"

"No, I don't. But then, the church is a pretty large building and we have a good many visitors every Sunday."

"You certainly have; and I sat well back. The fact is, Metropolitan wants you. It would make two of Memorial. It's a big family church and a people's church as well. It has the strongest group of business men and the whitest group I know of. They can do big things and they are out to do them. Then there's the music. Beats anything in the Dominion. We've been looking everywhere for the right man: all over Canada, United States and England. The boil-down of the whole thing is—Metropolitan wants Gordon Kennedy. Nominal salary, ten thousand a year."

"You almost paralyse me, Hobart! It's an extraordinary compliment. I know your offer presents a man with a wonderful opportunity."

"Just so. We touch all Canada there. We're the gateway of the East, meeting everything that comes in. We're the spout for the West, handling everything that goes out. Then, think of our McGill University and other great educational institutions. Opportunity? I guess so. Jim tells me that he has been wanting you to join him here and enter into other projects, but that you wouldn't listen to him. You're wise. Stick to the ministry! It's the noblest calling in the world, and we've got the stand for you right at the tip-top of it."

"Strange that you should have been so long without a pastor."

"Men who can carry big responsibilities and do big things are hard to find. In my own business it's easy to pick up fellows who can earn a thousand or two a year; but when I'm after a man that I want to pay a salary of ten or fifteen thousand to, I have to go hunting all over the lot to find him."

Gordon looked serious. "I don't think I ought encourage this, Hobart," he said. "It doesn't seem to me that the time has come for me to make a change. If I had been at Memorial for seven, or even five years, it would be a different matter. But three years represent a very short pastorate. Indeed, I've only just fairly commenced it."

"Well, I suspected you might feel that way about it. But I've noticed there are certain points in a minister's career which may be regarded as being specially favourable for making a change. One, is when he has completed the building of a new church; the other, is when he gets married."

Gordon laughed merrily.

"There might be something in what you say if I were marrying a girl in my own congregation, but not in this case."

"Excuse me! There *is* something in it, as it is. There'll be a certain amount of jealousy and tendency to criticize. There have been hopes indulged and expectations cherished. Oh, I know. But there would be nothing of that in coming to a new church. I think this offer comes in the nick of time for you. Don't turn it down!"

"But are you certain that the church, as a whole, would agree to invite me?"

"Yes. We have a selection committee of twenty. When they are unanimous in their choice, they make their recommendation to the church. There is no difference of opinion after that. The committee is carefully appointed and fully represents the church."

After some further discussion, Gordon said: "I realize that this creates a crisis for me. It's a tremendous matter to decide. I can't do that offhand. I must sleep on the matter and see how it looks then."

In the morning he told Hobart that he had fully decided to remain at Rosemount. He felt it to be his clear duty.

"It will be a great disappointment to us," said Hobart. "But, let me say, I think none the worse of you. When a man follows his conscience he's sure to come out right."

IX

DAVIE EVANS' ORGY

ON the morning of Gordon's departure for Vancouver to get married, Jim accompanied him as far as Mandeville. At the station he handed him a sealed envelope.

"Put that in your pocket! It's a little wedding present."

"Excuse me; I'm going to look at it now," said Gordon.

He opened the packet and the colour deepened in his face. The envelope contained a check for a thousand dollars.

"This is much too generous of you, Jim," exclaimed Gordon, as he wrung his brother's hand; "but I suppose I'm obliged to take it?"

"I guess you are. It's only a trifle."

Jim put his arm around Gordon. His face was twitching and a slight mist gathered in his eyes.

"Gordon," he said, "you know I wish you the very best of luck. I hope all your skies will be blue and all your seas be smooth. But if rough weather comes and you find yourself hard driven, remember there's a harbour for you here. Give my

love to Margaret!" Then he stooped and kissed him tenderly on the cheek.

At that moment Angus Ferguson rode up to the station on a heated horse. As he leaped to the platform, he cried, "Davie's gone! I've traced him here. He's awa' to Calgary. He'll be a dead man if I dinna' find him quick. I'm boardin' this train."

With that he dashed into the waiting-room to buy his ticket. Jim was after him like a shot, with Gordon close at his heels.

"Didn't you have him tied up?" asked Jim.

"I did; and well tied, too. Used a good sound lasso. It was double-hitched behind his back where he couldna' work at it. Only left him enough hand-play to feed himself. He was in me ain office. I had to be over at Southdip for the nicht and when I came back he was gone!"

"Great heavens! How do you account for it?"

Ferguson cast an apologetic glance at Gordon before he answered.

"I'm no' accountin' for it," he said, "at the moment. I'm atonin' for it as far as I can."

The train was now ready to leave, and Gordon and Ferguson got aboard.

"Take all the time you need, Ferguson!" said Jim, speaking through the open window of the car. "And spare no expense!"

"A' richt!"

When the travellers had settled down, Gordon said, "Now, Ferguson, what's all this about having Davie Evans tied up?"

The raw-boned, red-headed Scot leaned forward.

"You see, Mr. Gordon, it's like this," he began. "When Davie gets the cravin' for drink in him, he's in a verra bad way. He's fair blinded wi' it. He can think o' naethin' but the whuskey. At such times the drink appears to him like an angel of light beckonin' him to heaven. In his sober senses he kens it's the verra devil."

"Poor chap!" remarked Gordon.

"And Davie's afeered he'll go to hell," continued Ferguson. "I've been tellin' him he canno' go if he's been elected to salvation an' I've the conveection that he *has* been elected. For many a time I can witness the strivins of the Spirit in him. So when Davie says to me that the elect are them that overcome, and he isn't able to overcome the cravin' for drink when it seizes him, it's up to me to overcome Davie and *keep* him overcome till the cravin's gone. So I just tie him up. It's Davie's own request."

"Good idea, Ferguson! A bit of team-work between you and the Almighty, I'd call it. How many times have you tied him up?"

"This is the third time. It worked all right 'till now."

"And what has happened on this occasion? Did anyone interfere with your arrangements? That

would be a scoundrelly thing to do. The man who would do it is a hound."

"No man did it, Mr. Gordon. Nor could Davie do it himsel'. There was a different agency at work."

"It must have been the devil," exclaimed Gordon, "or one of his imps."

Then an idea occurred to him that suddenly checked the flow of his speech. He stared at Ferguson, but that worthy was looking out of the window, apparently absorbed in contemplation of the landscape. Gordon touched him on the knee.

"Tell me, Ferguson, was Laddie anywhere around? I left him in your charge, you know."

"He wasna far away. The fact is, I kenned it would be verra lonesome for poor Davie and I left Laddie with him for company. He's fine company, Laddie is, most interestin' and divertin' and always amiable and obligin'. I thoct I couldna' do better than to leave the two of 'em together."

"By the great hornspoon! Laddie did it, without a doubt," declared Gordon. "He would chew through a lasso in no time. That's a favourite trick of his. There's a little dog that lives across the street from me in Toronto. They keep him roped on the lawn. Every morning of his life Laddie goes over, chews his rope in two and takes him for a run. We all enjoy watching the performance. The little dog strains at the rope and pulls it taut,

while Laddie bites it through. It was Laddie that released Davie Evans. He did a bad job."

"We mus'na hold it agin him, Mr. Gordon. He had guid intentions. He couldna' ken what was goin' on inside o' Davie. He just saw a friend of his in trouble and he lent him a hand, or, so to speak, his teeth. He's a bonnie dog, is Laddie, always on the side o' the weak and strugglin'."

Having a few hours at Calgary before the Vancouver train would be due, Kennedy went with Ferguson in search of Davie. They visited one whiskey-dive after another, but for a considerable time could glean no information.

"They're a bunch of case-hardened liars," snorted Ferguson in disgust, as he came out of one place. "He's been in that hole. I could tell by the look in three-fingered Mulligan's eyes. Mulligan doesn't count a man's life as being worth a chew of tobacco. There's only one dope dealer in Calgary that's got a soul in him as big as a caraway seed. Put all the rest of their withered souls together and they'd rattle inside the pith of a horse-hair. We'll go to Mike Donlin's. Mike *is* a human being, although he does a lot of the devil's work."

They made their way to Ninth Street and walked two blocks west. Ferguson pointed to a sign over a narrow door, which read—"Donlin's Buffet." The entrance was little more than a hole in the wall. The room into which it opened was long, narrow and but dimly lighted. A counter ran along one

side of it. There were a few tables in the room, with rusty cutlery and dirty cruets scattered over them. Several men were at the counter with glasses partly filled with four per cent beer, with other small glasses standing empty beside them. The place reeked with whiskey. None of the customers were sober.

Donlin stood at the far end of the bar. He was a stout fellow with a pitted and scarlet-coloured face that had once been handsome. He was coatless, but looked clean and natty in his fresh shirt and becoming neckwear. At the sight of Ferguson he lifted the flap of the bar-counter and stepped briskly into the room. Ferguson went forward and shook hands with him. He introduced Gordon as "Mr. Kennedy's brother."

"You can guess what brings us here," said Ferguson.

"Sure thing. I've got him, all right. He was pie-eyed when he arrived. Pickled for fair. So full he couldn't speak. He just managed to get inside the door and then fell flat on his face. Come this way!"

He led them down a narrow passage and into a small, back room. There lay Davie stretched out on the bare floor. His face was purple. He was snoring heavily. There was no furniture of any sort in the room. The window was open and a black kitten sat purring on the sill.

"Excuse appearances and so forth," said Donlin.

"The place doesn't smell very sweet, although I've mopped it up a time or two. Cripes! He must have guzzled a gallon."

Ferguson knelt down and felt Davie's pulse. The drunken man was lying on his back with his coat folded under his head. His shirt was unbuttoned, revealing his bare chest.

"I've done the best I could for him," remarked Donlin. "We must leave the rest to nature."

"Bring a big bowl of ice-water, Mike, a sponge and a towel. Yes, and a chair of some sort while you're about it," said Ferguson.

These having been provided, Ferguson proceeded to sponge Davie's head, face and neck, while Kennedy bathed his hands, wrists and arms. This treatment was continued for a quarter of an hour. At the end of that time Davie was breathing more lightly. Then they rested awhile, and during the interval Donlin gave them another bowl of ice-water and a fresh towel. Ferguson ordered him to make a pot of extra strong coffee and to have it ready when he should call for it. The men renewed their work upon their patient. Kennedy lifted and lowered the man's arms for some minutes and then massaged his body. They turned him over on his face. Kennedy knelt astride of him and pressed his hands on either side of the spine. . . . Ferguson mopped the floor. Davie groaned and whimpered.

"This thing is a disease," said Kennedy. "A

physical and mental disease. It is only very slightly a moral disease in Davie's case. Can't we persuade him to take the Keeley cure?"

"It's no good for his sort," replied Ferguson.

Davie was now conscious and struggling to sit up. Ferguson raised him and supported him with his arm. Davie looked at his two friends and burst into tears.

"Dinna' greet, mon," said Ferguson. "Ye'll be a' richt the noo."

Few men could be as Scotch as Ferguson, and he knew that Davie loved to hear it spoken broadly. When Ferguson dropped an extra dash of Doric into his talk with Davie, the latter interpreted it as a token of affection. It meant that Ferguson was welcoming him into the inmost chamber of his heart.

Davie pressed his hands against his temples. "Why can't you leave me alone?" he snarled. "Why don't you let me drink myself to death and go where I belong? It's got to come to that. You're only postponing the inevitable."

"Have done wi' your babbling, mon!" said the Scot sternly. "I've told ye before that ye're no' goin' *there*. Man, do ye think I'd tell ye a lie?"

Davie put up a hand and stroked his friend's cheek.

"Fergy, dear, you're a wonderful friend."

"I'm no' verra wonderful, but I'm your friend, Davie."

"Then, for the love o' Mike, get me a hooker of whiskey!"

Ferguson strode from the room and Kennedy helped Davie to the chair.

"You won't mind me having just one glass, Mr. Gordon," he said humbly. "It will put me straight and then I'll go back to the ranch like a lamb . . . l-l-like Mary's little lamb."

"Whatever Ferguson does will be all right," responded Kennedy.

Presently Ferguson returned with a steaming pot of coffee. At sight of it Evans burst into a rage.

"Take that junk away," he cried. "And you call yourself a friend?"

"Ye maun hae it, Davie," said Ferguson. "It's the verra thing ye need."

"I can't touch it, I tell you, I can't touch it!" screamed the infuriated man. "My throat is burning through my skin for want of a drink of whiskey. It's the only thing I can swallow. You know it is. I'm dying for want of just a little whiskey. I'll be a dead man in ten minutes if you don't give it to me. You want to kill me, you rotten Scotch brute! You're a black-hearted villain; that's what you are!"

Ferguson gave no heed to Davie's wild ravings. He poured a cup of coffee and held it out.

"It smells good, Davie, and it is good. Ye'll just drink it down like a good boy."

Davie grasped the cup with a trembling hand.

He looked at it for a moment and then flung it straight at Ferguson's head.

Kennedy shouted a warning, but it was not needed. Ferguson was prepared. He dodged the cup, which went crashing against the wall. Then he looked at Davie and smiled.

"You're doin' fine, my friend! Keep it up and ye'll soon be a' richt. I'll fetch ye another cup. The Screepture sayeth that when the devil goeth out of a man it teareth him. He can only tear ye a wee bit more and then he'll be leavin' ye and goin' to his ain place. I reckon it's the last time he'll ever trouble ye in this way."

Ferguson brought a second cup and filled it. Davie's eyes brimmed with tears of remorse. As he took the cup, he said, "Fergy, it would have served me right if you had flung me on the floor and stamped the soul out of me."

"Nay, mon! It wasna' ye that did it. It was your evil genius. Ye're a fine man, Davie. Mr. Gordon and me are both holdin' that opeenion of ye."

Davie sipped his coffee slowly for a minute. Then he lifted the cup to his lips and drained it. He held it out to be refilled.

He drank four cups. Then they left the place. On going out, Ferguson handed Donlin a ten-dollar bill. Donlin waved it aside.

"Not on your life! I'd as soon steal pennies off a dead man's eyes."

"But ye're to take it, mon. Ye've done us a great service."

"Look here, Ferguson," said Donlin, "I'm a rough outfit, as you know, but I'm fond of Davie. I wouldn't let him have a drink of whiskey for a thousand dollars, and I'm not going to touch your money. I'm glad you came after Davie, and it's a mighty good job you got here as soon as you did."

Mike was thinking of a time, some months back, when Evans had leaped about like a madman in that same room, screaming in terror as he tried to rid himself of the snakes which he imagined were coiling themselves around his body. On that occasion he had kept the poor fellow three days and nights under lock and key.

Ferguson now led the way to a restaurant. He secured a table in a quiet corner and ordered food. Davie ate two oranges, a few bits of toast and drank a couple of glasses of water. The others made a substantial meal.

While they were eating the Welshman remained silent, sunk in deep depression. It was bad enough to have Ferguson find him in his disgusting, filthy condition without having Gordon Kennedy a witness to his disgrace. He had formed a great liking for his employer's brother. He was proud of having won his friendship. Now he must be regarded as a loathsome creature, in need of the minister's pity, but no longer worthy of his respect. He was also grieving over the more serious consequences

of his downfall, feeling that it had precipitated him a long way towards final perdition. It seemed to him that his very soul was being torn into shreds in the clutches of conscience, remorse and dread.

At the core of him, David Evans was a decent fellow. The current of his thoughts ran clean. He was the sort of a man whom the purest girl need not fear to walk with over a lonely prairie at midnight. He had a tender love of all things beautiful on the round earth and in the blue sky. His spirit was tuned to a high note. He was essentially a poet and Nature had given him a glorious tenor voice. Many a night he would go out into the deep solitude of the prairie and sing to the stars; then, listening in rapt silence, he would hear the angels singing back to him. Those were his hours of ecstasy, when he got visions of himself clothed in white raiment, walking the heavenly streets of gold and drinking from the river flowing clear as crystal from the throne of God. But for his one weakness, Davie Evans would have gone far with the men who brighten the world and instil sweetness into human life.

His drunkenness was not a gradually acquired vice. The very first time he drank any liquor he got drunk; and every other time it was the same way with him. The taste of alcohol set him on fire. Then he would drink until he became a tortured, writhing agony—a soul in the shades of utter night.

In earlier years, Evans held to the hope that he

might find deliverance through prayer from the demon-clutch of drink, but of late he had given up that hope. Despite his prayers the craving for drink would suddenly seize him; then self-respect, instinct of self-preservation, sense of responsibility, fear of God, sanity, everything—went by the board!

He was thinking, now, that his latest rescue was but love's labour lost. The game wasn't worth the candle. It merely postponed the inevitable. He was doomed to die drunk. Then he heard Gordon Kennedy speaking to him.

"Davie," said Kennedy, "I want you to realize that these drinking bouts of yours are only eddies in the main current of your life. And you are to remember that it is the current, not the eddy, that decides one's destiny. Many a fierce and ugly eddy may appear in the stream here and there, but the force of the stream will break and disperse them all. It will bring you home."

Davie slowly shook his head. His blue eyes filled with tears.

"Mr. Gordon," he replied sadly, "I'll die drunk. The eddy will suck me down and drown me. Then I'll sink into the pit. No drunkard can inherit the kingdom of heaven; it's the plain teaching of Scripture."

Kennedy put his hand on Davie's shoulder and gripped it hard.

"Listen to me! If you should get into the pit

you couldn't stay there long. You'd be wanting what was right and good. You'd be longing for God. Your soul would be crying out for Him. The cry would not be denied."

"But I've been taught that the home of the lost is a fixed state. Once you get there you stay there, according to my reading of the Bible," replied Davie.

"My friend, many readers of the Bible fail to reach the essence of its teaching on that and many other matters. Isn't it so, Ferguson?"

"Aye," replied the hard-boiled Scotchman, "but ye canna' abolish hell. It's there in the Word and in the Divine decrees. A religion without a hell wouldna' be any good for sinful men. It wouldna' have the necessary pull, I'm thinkin'. We're all needin' to keep a hell in view in order to experience the proper spiritual reaction."

Kennedy's eyes darkened.

"You think far too well of hell, Ferguson, and you think much too poorly of Almighty God. Now, let's face the whole subject in the light of what we know about God. God is good. He creates no hells. He is the Author of purity, peace and joy. Men make their own hells and God is all the while working to *unmake* them. That is the gospel truth. God has flooded out many a hell on earth by His rich, heavenly grace. He's doing it all the time. He floods hell out of a man's soul when He puts love of goodness into him and strength to do

right. His attitude to men cannot change when men pass through the experience we call death. He's the same sort of God, yesterday, today and forever."

"But what about the non-elect?" queried Ferguson.

"Hearken, man! The elect are the 'whosoever will' and 'whensoever they will.' The non-elect are the 'whosoever won't,' and as long as they won't—not a moment longer."

"Weel," replied Ferguson after a pause, "it's a teachin' that's verra much to my likin', although I'm findin' it deeficult to accept it, owing to my early instruction. But grantin' what ye say is true, isna' there a place of everlastin' punishment described in the Bible?"

"I think there is, though many distinguished Bible scholars differ from that view. 'Hell' is a pictorial word with various implications and flexible uses. But an eternal hell can only be for those who remain eternally incorrigible."

"Weel, an' doesna' that settle the argument? Death fixes a man's state for all eternity."

"Ferguson," said Kennedy, "you ascribe tremendous functions to death and hell. You would make them mightier than life and God. Now, what do you mean by death fixing a man's state? Do you mean that it fixes *the state of his mind?* Can one have no better afterthoughts when he has passed beyond this bourne of time and space?

Think, man! If one dies insane, does he remain a lunatic for all eternity? If he dies drunk, does he stay drunk forever?"

Davie Evans leaned forward with a look on his face like that of a man listening to his reprieve from the gallows. Kennedy went on.

"The essence of hell is alienation from goodness and from God," Kennedy went on. "If God can overcome that alienation in the souls of depraved and hardened sinners in this life, He can do it in the life beyond. Every time He cancels a man's sin He wipes out a hell, whether He does it here or over yonder."

"Hallelujah!" shouted Davie Evans, ignoring his surroundings. Ferguson's face showed strong displeasure.

"Hist, mon, be still!" Then turning to Kennedy, he said, "It's bad work ye've been doin' the day. Verra bad work. Davie won't be carin' now if he does die drunk."

"Oh, Fergy, dear, you don't understand!" cried Davie. "I'll dread it more than ever now. And I'll fight the harder. I've got a new motive. It's like this: I'm feeling now the sore disgrace of wallowing in my drunken spew on the floor of Mike Donlin's dive. I hope never to do such a thing again. But how would I dread to be falling down in that filthy condition at the feet of my dear old father over yonder in the homeland? I'm hoping to go home to Conway one day and see that good

old man. I want to go sober and clean and . . . fit to kiss his lips. And I want to go sober and clean to my heavenly Father. I want to go with a heaven of song in my heart—not a hell of remorse in my soul."

Ferguson put an arm around him and hugged him hard.

"God bless ye, lad I'm verra certain the noo, that ye've been elected to salvation," he said. Then he grasped Kennedy's hand.

"Ye'll mebbe be forgivin' a rough outspoken Scot," he said, "for his insultin' word to ye. I was sair troubled aboot Davie or I wouldna' hae said the wicked thing I did. Ye've done a graund day's work, Mr. Gordon. Ye've hitched Davie's wagon to a star."

X

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

FERGUSON and Davie departed on the first train out of Calgary back to Mandeville, and Kennedy continued his journey on the westbound train. As he travelled towards the coast, his mind reverted to many things which had occupied his thoughts during his two-months' stay on his brother's ranch. Chief among these matters was, of course, his meeting with Margaret. When he left Toronto, nothing was further from his mind than an early marriage. Indeed, he had begun to doubt if he should ever marry. Until then he had remained heart-whole and fancy free. The girls he had met were good girls, so far as he knew. Many of them were admirable; but none of them made any special impression upon him. For the most part they were inclined to be overkind. A time or two some highly seasoned society miss of the self-confident, forward, man-managing sort, would attempt to take charge of him, addressing him by his first name and indulging in small familiarities, but these speedily abandoned the field, outwardly complacent but inwardly crestfallen. At the end of his three years

in Rosemount he considered himself well set in bachelordom.

Then he had met Margaret Pearson; and the meeting had made all the difference in the world. He could not feel that he had rushed hastily into love. During those days of intercourse with her on their long westward journey, he had opportunity to see all round the circle of her mind and to look deeply into her character. He found culture, sweetness, refinement, breadth of sympathy and strength of will. These qualities were associated with physical health and beauty, grace of manner and charm of speech. He had yet to observe in her an unpleasing movement or hear from her a jarring word.

Having said these things to himself, he concluded that he must be tremendously in love. Was love playing its favourite trick upon him, blinding and making mock of him? He had been painting a mental picture of a perfect woman or an angel in woman form; and no such beings existed on this blighted orb. Well, whatever flaws existed in the woman of his choice would be disclosed in the wear and tear of the daily round. Life's attritions would disclose the alabaster's inmost veinings. He wondered if Margaret could *ever* be bad-tempered or stubborn, petulant or morose?

Kennedy had bachelor friends who declared that ninety-five per cent of the world's women practised lifelong deceit. They affirmed that it was woman's only way of capturing and holding men.

"Look at any young courting couple!" they would say. "Observe how the girl goes beyond her normal self in vivacity, in the use of her eyes and in pleasant smiles, while the young fellow remains quite natural or perhaps becomes a trifle gruff."

This reflection upon the opposite sex always angered Kennedy and he swore he had never observed anything of the sort. Kennedy could readily excuse himself for telling a chivalrous untruth. But in the case of Margaret Pearson he would challenge the world to discover a trace of artificiality or the slightest posing for effect.

Her letters to him since their engagement had confirmed all his previous impressions and emotions. They were rose leaves wet with dew. He had no doubt that Margaret would fit in well with the life at Toronto, and he counted himself the most fortunate man in the world that he could take her there as his bride. And so he journeyed from Calgary to the coast feeling that fate had dropped a fabulous fortune at his feet.

His first day in Vancouver was a busy one. He found many letters from Toronto awaiting him at his hotel. They were all encouraging. "The King could do no wrong." His people were prepared to welcome his bride. The church secretary wrote that they intended to lasso her with a rope of roses.

He lost no time in visiting Margaret, and found

her in high spirits. She showed him a letter from Jim that put a catch in his throat.

"Pretty decent sort of a brother, eh?" he remarked as he handed back the letter.

"He's just the dearest dear on earth next to his younger brother," she replied. "What a glorious husband he would make!"

"Jim will never marry, worse luck. He has had his romance."

"Then I must try to be just the best possible sort of sister to him. I love him very much already."

On the evening before their wedding they went for a walk over Indian Hill. She wished him to see the city from that viewpoint. On their way he asked, "Have you no misgivings, dearest?"

"Certainly not! Why should I have?"

"Well, I'm thinking of what enormous trust a woman reposes in a man when she gives herself to be his wife. It seems only natural that she should sometimes have a feeling of fear."

"'Perfect love casteth out fear,'" she quoted. A moment later she added, "If there's any room for misgiving or fear, it's on your part, not mine."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because you know less of me than I do of you. The first moment I saw you in your church I had the whole background of your life in view. I saw your past and your present and even your future. I saw your standing, character, attainments, ideals

and purposes. It was all clearly before me. It's vastly different with you."

"I disagree. But, tell me, do you think, as a rule, a wife is more dependent upon her husband for happiness than he is upon her?"

"I doubt it. A man is constantly at the mercy of his wife. She may not be able to make him happy, but she's always capable of making him miserable. An unfortunate marriage may not wreck a man's life, if he be exceptionally strong in character, but it will certainly destroy his happiness."

"Margaret," he said tenderly, "you are going to make me one of the happiest men in the world. And—I might have missed you. I came near missing you. If you hadn't happened to be travelling by that train I should never have met you. Jove! That was wonderful luck! Do you know, I feel sorry for your father when I think of taking you away from him. I wonder if he has been grieving about it? He doesn't look as well as he did when I was here before."

"He isn't well, but he won't admit it. He has been overworking and not sleeping well. He's run down and nervous. He has promised me that he'll take a holiday after our wedding. But I know he isn't grieving about me. The only times when he seems quite his old happy self are when we're discussing the marriage. He loves to picture my future with you. Isn't it sweet of him?"

"It is, indeed. And we'll keep in touch with him. One of the first things we'll do will be to send him a photograph of our suite of rooms at the Marlborough. We're going to be wonderfully well fixed there for the winter. It's one of the most up-to-date apartment houses in the city."

"I'm afraid we're commencing our married life rather extravagantly, dear. We must keep within our income. As you know, my private income, at the present moment, is nil."

"That's all right, sweetheart! Our expenses won't put too great a strain upon my stipend."

"I hope not. But, you see, I can't help thinking how suddenly all these new expenses have come upon you. It isn't as if you had been planning for them. Really, that was one reason why I suggested waiting a year. I didn't want you to be burdened financially. I shall have considerable money a little later on."

"Dearest, you've brought me wealth already." Then he told her of his wedding present from Jim.

From the summit of the hill the city presented an attractive sight with its massive buildings of stone and brick, its noble Stanley Park, and its pleasing water-front now lined with coasting craft and dignified by the presence of a Canadian and Pacific liner preparing for her departure to the Orient.

Presently their attention was withdrawn from the

landscape to the sky. A wonderful scene had opened around and above them. The whole vast vault of heaven was a pageant of clouds struck through with tender trembling lights. East and north, away to the horizon, stood detached cloud-mountains of rose, resting on pearl-grey foothills. The southern arc of sky seemed like a broad range of hills, darkly wooded at the top and sloping down through stately parks and emerald pastures to dainty meadows of pink, which touched upon lakes of lilac, gradually shading into pools of mauve. The west was one blaze of golden glory—a city of gold, cleft by a royal avenue of gold, leading up by golden terraces to a majestic golden throne.

They stood in silence while the cloud formations gradually dissolved and the colours faded from the sky.

Margaret was the first to speak.

"I never saw anything half so glorious in all my life. It might have been given for you and me."

"Indeed it might. It seemed to me like a vision of 'new Jerusalem coming down . . . out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'"

On their way back he told her many things about his plans and his work. Finally he told about the offer from the Metropolitan Church.

"I hope you think I did right," he said.

"You certainly did nothing wrong; but weren't you making a great sacrifice? Opportunities like

that do not come more than once or twice in a lifetime."

"Perhaps there *was* some little sacrifice in it. But I owe a great deal to Memorial; and I'm young yet. I can afford to wait a few years before striking twelve. And I considered you. It will be more pleasant for you to go with me into a community where I'm well known and into a church where I'm well established than to take up life under conditions new to both of us."

Her face was all aglow as she turned to him and said, "I shall be happy with you in any place on earth where your duty calls you. Rosemount is a lovely spot. It will be Paradise for me. But I shouldn't like to think that I stood in the way of your promotion."

"You didn't. I felt that my duty lay at Memorial, for the present," he replied.

XI

A WEDDING AND AN ARREST

THE wedding took place at noon in the Golden room. They were to leave at three-fifty for the first stage of their eastward journey. After the luncheon and while the men were chatting in the lounge, a messenger-boy arrived with a batch of telegrams for Gordon. They were mostly from his church friends bearing their congratulations. He was engaged in reading them when the door-bell rang again and two men were admitted. They were shown into the reception room where they were immediately joined by Pearson. A few moments later the door opened and Pearson beckoned to Silcox.

It was now half-past two. Margaret was in her room changing her wedding dress for a travelling costume. Gordon was already in his lounge suit. Having finished the reading of his congratulations, he went into the hall. He could hear the hum of conversation in the adjoining room, with Pearson's voice occasionally rising above the others. Lest he should overhear what was not intended for his ears, he returned to the lounge. Five minutes passed; he became anxious. Ten

minutes; each moment his anxiety increased. It would soon be time to get away. Margaret must be nearly ready now. He would go and see if he could find Mrs. Silcox. As he reached the foot of the stairs, she appeared in the hall above and called: "Come up and strap the trunks! They're ready."

He bounded up the stairs and into Margaret's room.

"Oh, I say! Lovelier and lovelier!" he exclaimed, as he threw his arms around her and kissed her.

"Isn't she the sweetest thing that ever happened?" he asked, turning to her aunt.

"I don't think you have much to complain of," she replied.

As he was strapping the trunks Mrs. Silcox asked: "Where are Fred and Arthur?"

"I think they are talking business with two gentlemen who have called."

"Business!" she exclaimed. "What a queer time for talking business! We must be leaving soon for the station. It's nearly three miles and we don't want to arrive there at the last minute. The taxis will be here in another quarter of an hour. I must go and find Uncle Fred."

She met her husband coming up the stairs. In an instant it was evident to her that something was wrong.

"What's the matter, Fred?" she asked.

"I'll tell you in a minute," he said. "Come into the room."

Entering the room he looked at Margaret and then at Gordon in a helpless way. Then he cleared his throat.

"I've got some rather unpleasant news," he said, in an unsteady voice. "It comes at a most unfortunate time."

"What is it? Is it anything serious?" cried Margaret, in alarm.

"Yes. Your father is in trouble."

"In trouble? Is he ill? Where is he?"

"No, he isn't ill! He's in trouble over money matters. He has been speculating with money that belonged to the Company."

Her face blanched.

"Do you mean that my father has been stealing money from his firm?" she asked, in a horror-stricken voice.

"No; he misappropriated it. When one *steals* a thing he takes it with the intention of keeping it and never returning it. Your father fully intended to replace the money; but he has been unable to do so. He has been unwise and unfortunate in his speculations. Of course, it is a serious offence in the eyes of the law."

"How much has he taken?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"How much can he pay back?"

"Nothing at all."

She pressed her hand to her forehead as if to clear her brain. Gordon put his arm around her.

"But, Uncle, I don't understand. What did he want with the money, and what has he done with it?"

"He wanted to make a fortune in a hurry, and he thought he saw a sure way of doing it. He gambled on the stock market and lost it all. He bought on margins and when the stocks went down his margins were wiped out, and he was ruined."

"My father? A gambler and a defaulter? Is that what it means?"

"I fear so. He admits it."

She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"Isn't it possible to get the matter settled out of court?" asked Gordon anxiously.

"It has gone too far for that; it's out of the Company's hands. It's a Crown case now. It must go to trial," replied Silcox.

"But if the money can be returned before the case goes to court?"

"That will make a great difference," replied Silcox. "I'm prepared to put up the money at once."

Margaret clutched the arms of her chair till her hands whitened under the pressure. She lifted a blanched, strained face and gazed at Gordon with burning eyes.

Presently she turned to Silcox and asked: "Has Father been arrested?"

"Yes, Margaret. Two detectives are with him now in the reception room."

There was a sound of approaching vehicles. Glancing out of the window, Gordon saw the taxis drawing up in front of the house.

"The taxis have arrived," he said. "Of course we can't get away now. We must see Mr. Pearson. Perhaps, after that, we may be able to catch the evening boat to Victoria. We can go there for a day or two and keep in touch with Vancouver until this tangle has been straightened out. I'll go and dismiss the taxis."

"No, I'll do that," said Silcox.

Mrs. Silcox followed her husband out of the room. When they were alone Gordon went to Margaret and put his arms around her.

"Darling, don't grieve too much!" he said. "I'm so glad that you're my wife now, and that I have a husband's right to help you bear your trouble."

He could feel her body trembling. She was drawing her breath in convulsive gasps. Presently she put her hands on his shoulders and tried to push him away. "Let me go, please! I want to get up."

For answer he tried to embrace her, but she still held herself away from him. Kennedy rose to his feet and said: "Margaret, this trouble cannot be allowed to come between you and me in any way.

It must only bind us closer together. Partnership in one big trouble can do more to tighten the bonds of love than the sharing of a thousand pleasures."

She looked at him despairingly for a moment and then asked: "Shall we go and speak with Father now?"

"Yes, dear," he answered.

As they entered the reception room, the detectives rose. Pearson turned his head away.

"May we have a few minutes' private conversation with my father?" asked Margaret.

"Certainly. As much time as you wish."

The detectives then left the room. Margaret went to her father, and kissed him on the forehead. He looked up at her piteously.

"Margaret, I'm in torture!" he moaned. "This is terrible for both of you. This—this, on your wedding day! My God!"

"Mr. Pearson," said Gordon, "the situation might be much worse; the money can be refunded. Has Mr. Silcox told you?"

"Yes. Still, in the eyes of the law, I'm a criminal. Nothing can paint that fact white."

"Father, is it true that you have nothing at all to put against the fifty thousand due to the Company?" asked Margaret.

"Yes, it's true."

"And did you know before today that the shortage had been discovered?"

"Yes, and the Company knew about it in the lat-

ter part of July. I asked for six weeks in which to refund the money. I've had six weeks and three days."

"And during that time was there nothing that could have been done to put things right? Why didn't you tell Uncle Fred?"

"I was confident that I could pull through alone. I had what seemed to be the most reliable inside information regarding certain stocks. I sold my life insurance policy for twenty thousand dollars and speculated with that. It disappeared and I drew *your* ten thousand dollars and staked it in a last frantic effort to recoup myself. That went where all the rest had gone—the Company's money and mine. I have robbed you as well as the Company. Altogether, I've sunk one hundred and twenty thousand dollars during the last six months."

Margaret felt as if she were being choked. Her hand went to her throat. Presently she said: "I can't understand it at all, Father. Are we to understand that you knew that you were liable to arrest, at any time, during the last three days?"

"Yes," he whispered.

"Why did you not tell me about it?"

"I couldn't. I hadn't the courage. I kept trying to hope that the crash wouldn't come until after you were married and had gone away."

"But, Father, didn't you see how necessary it was that Gordon should know about it?"

"I endured tortures. My pluck was gone and

my judgment had crumbled. I feared that if I disclosed the true state of affairs it might prevent the marriage."

"Mr. Pearson," said Gordon, warmly, "you were mistaken in that. Had you told me everything the first moment I landed in Vancouver, I should have pressed for the wedding just the same."

Margaret and her father looked at Gordon in amazement. Presently Pearson said: "It is inconceivable that you could have done that. I've cruelly wronged you—wronged you beyond forgiveness. God only knows what this will mean for you. And I've disgraced Margaret. The stigma will stick to her for life. God! It's terrible! Let them take me away. I can't stand any more."

As they stepped out into the hall the chief detective came forward.

"If Mr. Pearson wishes to take any wearing apparel or other articles for his personal use," he said, "he is quite at liberty to do so. He will have a comfortable room and a good many privileges—at least until the trial."

"Thank you," said Margaret. "I'll pack his travelling case."

She proceeded to her father's room. Gordon went into the lounge. Presently he heard the detective 'phoning for a taxi. A few minutes later Silcox came down the stairs with a travelling case.

"I'm going with him, Gordon," he said in explanation. "I want to give instructions about his

meals and look after some other details. I may not be able to see you again before you get away. I'm mighty sorry that this trouble has come to you. I hope Margaret will soon brighten up. I think she will, under your care. The housekeeper will look after things here and Mrs. Silcox will keep an oversight. Wire me your address so that I can keep in touch with you. I shall try to see Myers, the President of the Company, at once, and pay the money over."

The two men gripped hands for an instant and then Gordon hurried away to find Margaret.

"We can catch the boat for Victoria, dear. We have an hour and a half," said Gordon.

"Listen, Gordon!" replied Margaret. "Father was quite correct when he said that if we had known how matters stood with him, our marriage would not have taken place."

"Margaret, please believe that I know myself well enough to be quite certain it would have made no difference," returned Gordon. "It hurts to think you could have any doubt about that."

"But you seem to be forgetting that there were two parties to the marriage. I tell you, that if I had had the slightest suspicion of the true state of affairs, I should have refused to marry you, even down to the very last minute. I have been foisted upon you by a trick and I have been cheated out of my sacred right of self-determination. Being what

I was, the daughter of Arthur Pearson, gambler and defaulter, I should have been permitted to govern myself accordingly. I was denied my right of choice. Hence I repudiate the marriage contract. It was a fraud."

Kennedy's face went livid and the sweat stood like beads on his forehead. But his voice remained calm.

"My dear, you're overwrought," he said. "This trouble has crashed down upon you without a moment's warning. I know it's a cruel blow. You're stunned by it. You'll feel better if you get a little rest. Let me bring you a cup of tea! I'll forget what you've just said. We'll both forget it."

She looked him steadily in the eyes.

"No, I shall not forget it, nor retract it," returned Margaret resolutely. "I repeat it. I definitely and solemnly repudiate our marriage on the ground that it was contracted under circumstances which defrauded me of clear judgment and intelligent choice. I've been duped and I've been made a party to a fraud upon you. Here's the wedding ring. I want you to take it back."

"That's wild talk, Margaret! Let's keep to reason! We must think hard and plan out what's best to be done. We must act together with one heart and mind."

"Gordon Kennedy, *do you realize that it's absolutely impossible for me to go to Rosemount with you?*"

For a time he made no reply.

"Sweetheart," he then said quietly, "if you feel that way about it, we must count the church out. My first and most sacred duty is to my wife."

"Do you mean that you will resign your pastorate?"

"Yes, if you make it necessary."

"And having resigned from Rosemount, what then?" she asked.

"There are other churches. As you know, I have some standing in the ministry."

"If you can't take me to Rosemount where you are so well known and loved, how, with this disgrace clinging to me, could you take me to another church?"

He felt the force of this argument immediately.

"I *can* take you to Rosemount," he said hotly—"if you're willing to go. We can soon live this thing down. It will all blow over in a short while."

"If the minister's father-in-law is serving a term in prison?" she queried.

"But how could it help matters were we to separate? If I can't take you with me, neither can I go without you."

He was pacing the room with his arms folded behind his back.

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" he said presently, "I'll stand aside from the ministry altogether for a time. We'll go to the ranch. Jim will be delighted. He has been wanting me to join him. You'll love

the life and so will I, for a time. There's barrels of money in it. I can make ten thousand dollars a year, at least. Jim has some big schemes in mind that I can join with him in carrying out. I shall have things to do that will be worth while. Perhaps they may turn out to be bigger things than I could touch in the ministry. That's the solution of the problem, Mrs. Margaret Kennedy."

She winced as he spoke her name.

"That is only a makeshift for you, Gordon. Nothing more. But I shall not go to the ranch nor anywhere else with you. Try to imagine what it would mean for me to live with you while these two terrible facts stare me in the face—that I had driven you out of the ministry and that my father was in penal servitude. It would be torture for both of us."

"My dear wife," he said tenderly, "you need not fear that I shall ever utter a word of reproach, or do anything to humiliate you."

"We should humiliate each other," she replied. "My presence would be a constant reminder of your ruined career, and your presence would constantly recall my disgrace. Gordon, the woman was never born who could be more to an earnest man than his career. If she ruins it on his wedding day, how can she hope for peace? How can she make amends? How can she be forgiven?"

"You have done nothing that calls for forgiveness,—not the least single thing! You have been

sinned *against*. For the present you have been crushed. It's a heavy blow for both of us. But all the more we need each other. We must hold each other up."

She shook her head slowly and sadly.

"I could do nothing to hold you up," she said. "I should be a millstone round your neck."

As she said these words the expression on her face was one of blank despair. He sat down beside her and tried to take her hands. She drew them away.

"Margaret, dear," he said, "many a man has had to surrender his career through some misfortune. A strong man doesn't whine about that. If he feels he has missed his best, he goes on cheerfully to make the most of his second best. Aren't you willing to help me do that? You *can* help me, and I need you."

Her face was quivering now and the hot tears were scalding her cheeks.

"I cannot help you, Gordon; I'm debarred. How can I, the cause of your trouble, become the cure of it? We must both suffer. I'm willing to suffer, but I'm not willing to harbour illusions or bring further disappointment into your life."

"But you're forgetting the greatest thing of all. You're forgetting where love comes in."

"No. I am remembering where love goes *out*."

"True love does *not* go out. It bears all things:

it never fails. You don't distrust my love, do you?"

Her eyes evaded his.

"I distrust—life. I distrust myself."

"But your love for me hasn't changed. You love me the same as before, don't you?"

She looked at him with swimming eyes in which the light of love shone through her tears.

"No, not just the same. Yesterday I loved you as many another woman has loved the man she was about to marry. Today, I adore you! That is why I want to save you from myself. Please leave me, now!"

"Leave you—after those words?"

"Yes, if you still respect me. I beg of you to be merciful to me! Don't kiss me, or touch me! Just leave me—at least until tomorrow."

"It shall be as you wish," he replied, in a gentle voice.

With that he rose and left the room.

XII

A WIFELESS HUSBAND

BEFORE leaving the house Gordon had a talk with Mrs. Silcox. He told her of the attitude Margaret had taken and expressed the hope that it represented no more than a temporary phase of her shocked and troubled mind. He thought it was a woman's influence she needed now, a woman's sympathy and advice. Mrs. Silcox promised to do her best to bring her to a different view. She would stay with her for the night.

"Will you go over to Bay View and spend the night with Fred?"

"Thank you, no. I would rather go back to my hotel. I need to be by myself, tonight, to think things out—alone. I shall have letters to write and telegrams to send."

"Won't it be embarrassing for you, if the hotel people know of your movements?"

"They know nothing more than that I gave up my room and paid my bill. I didn't take them into my confidence regarding my marriage."

"But the announcement of it will be in this evening's papers. Fred 'phoned it before luncheon."

"Well, that won't matter. No one will say anything about it to me. If they do—what of it?"

"I fear there will be something about Arthur in the morning papers. The reporters are so keen in ferreting things out. They are always on the alert for anything sensational."

"Mrs. Silcox, I care little or nothing, now, for what the public may say. They will come round to a different view presently, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Silcox. He has already grasped the nettle firmly and squeezed the sting out of it."

He went to the hotel and booked a room.

"For tonight only?" asked the clerk in the office as he swung the register around to be signed.

"Can't say as yet," answered Kennedy crisply.

After seeing his baggage deposited in his room he went to the nearest telegraph office and wired to the Secretary of Memorial Church.

"Please advise Church officials of my desire to resign forthwith. Kennedy."

Returning to his room he spent an hour in trying to write a brief note to Jim. Finally he abandoned the attempt. He sat for some time brooding over the events of the day. He became more and more depressed as the ugly facts and their inevitable consequences wormed their way into his consciousness. He realized that the sting had *not* been squeezed out of the nettle. It was there. It was stinging him.

This sinister turn of the wheel of destiny had devastated him. His life was disrupted. The work he loved—the work to which he had given all his energy, enthusiasm and hope,—had been suddenly snatched away from him. Fate had seized and ruthlessly flung him against a blank stone wall.

So, this was the evening of his wedding day, an evening paling into darkness through a deepening gloom of loneliness and a thickening cloud of disgrace! It had been possible to put on a bold front while he had Margaret to uphold and enhearten. But alone, here in this quiet room, optimism was hard to come by. The resilience had gone out of his soul. Had Margaret taken a different view and adopted a different course of action, together they could have braved this storm and found a place of peace. . . . But she was making everything so difficult, so hopeless. Undoubtedly, she was altogether conscientious in what she was doing. Yet there it was, all the same!

As he brooded the situation deeply he reached the conviction that in Margaret the wife-consciousness had been suddenly aborted. This hideous event had clutched and strangled it just as it was coming to birth. It was otherwise with him. His sense of husbandhood had been quickened and intensified by what had happened. The misfortune had accentuated in him the feeling of oneness with her. It had brought a swift and appealing opportunity for him to honour, cherish and protect her.

She had struck that opportunity away from him—she had pushed him back upon himself. Yet he could not doubt that she truly loved him.

Obviously her love was mixed with an element of pride Was it legitimate and justifiable pride? He could understand how pride might reasonably have operated to prevent an immediate marriage had she known of her father's affairs a little earlier. But she was now married to him. It was not possible for her to obtain a legal separation. Before the law and in the eyes of all the world she must now be regarded as his wife. If any stigma attached to her it must now be shared by him. Her refusal to live with him could not wipe out that fact.

Was she *afraid* of him? Afraid lest he might grow weary under his burden of disappointment and weaken in his affection for her? Had she not once said to him that perfect love left no room for fear? But it now appeared that haggard fear had hounded and clutched her love to hold her back from a full commitment of herself to him. This thought hammered at his mind with painful insistence and beat him down into despondency.

He must get out of this room. The air of it stifled him. He would make a night of it out of doors. Then, for one awful moment, it seemed as if the door of hades were flung open and demons from the pit invaded his soul, bidding him go out and drown his agonizing thoughts in some wild revel. He could find company, plenty of it, that

would enliven the hours of this wretched night. There were excitements, pleasures, fierce indulgences only waiting to be purchased.

But Gordon Kennedy's soul, like a well-found ship, had been antecedently prepared for this sudden storm of temptation. His lifelong habit of moral discipline and obedience to conscience was now instantaneously converted into instinct for right action. Even as the storm smote and shook him, conscience gave the right order: will pulled the right rope. He was "the captain of his soul" again, "the master of his fate."

For a moment he knelt in prayer, asking for patience, wisdom and guidance. Then he rose, strengthened and comforted. He believed that he could bear his burden, now, without any galling of his soul. He believed the Almighty had laid it upon him and the Almighty would uphold him.

He had forgotten to take his evening meal, but now he felt the need of food. It was past the hour for serving dinner in the hotel, but restaurants were open. He went out into the streets and walked several blocks before finding what he wanted. Presently he came to an attractive looking place, and went in and ordered a savoury omelet, rolls and coffee. The room in which he sat was brilliantly lighted. There were many people about. While he was waiting for his order to be filled, a newsboy rushed in with a stack of papers under his arm, bawling out:

"SPESH-SHOLL! All about the big robbery! *'Sholl!* All about the *Timber Milling Case!* 'SHOLL! All about the arrest of PEARSON! Paper, sir?"

The patrons of the restaurant eagerly bought up the papers. The droning hum of conversation quickly changed to animated discussion. Exclamations were heard on every hand. Gordon bought a paper and turned to the column reserved for late important and sensational news. There he read as follows:

"DOWNFALL OF A VANCOUVER MAN.

"SURPRISING CAREER OF STOCK GAMBLING AND EMBEZZLEMENT.

"MR. ARTHUR JAMES PEARSON, SECRETARY-TREASURER OF THE PACAFIC TIMBER MILLING COMPANY, ARRESTED FOR MISAPPROPRIATION OF TRUST FUNDS.

"Mr. Arthur James Pearson was arrested at his home this afternoon on a warrant charging him with diverting to his own use a large sum of money belonging to the Pacific Timber Milling Company. There are various rumours afloat regarding the sum involved, but we understand it is in the neighbourhood of $100,000. It is believed that the defaulter has been losing heavily of late in speculative operations on the stock market.

"A poignant feature in connection with the case is the fact that Mr. Pearson's only daughter was married at noon, today, to Rev. Gordon Kennedy,

M.A.B.D., the popular minister of Memorial Church, Toronto. Sincere sympathy will be felt for the newly-wedded couple who were present in Mr. Pearson's home when the arrest was made."

He laid aside his newspaper and addressed himself to the food which had been brought. As he ate, he mused upon the mentality of press reporters. No doubt he owed something to newspaper men for favourable notices of himself and his work. He reckoned that the account had now been squared. He could not think that the man who wrote those words he had just read had been intentionally brutal. As a rule, newspaper men were decent and kindly fellows. Nor was the man lacking in imagination. He was simply a hustling reporter, with a keen nose for news, bent on giving artistic completeness to his brief announcement of a sensational event. He must omit no element of shock. He was a storm-chaser and paid to be so. The few individuals whose souls might be lacerated by the gratuitous reference to the wedding could not count against the lust of a multitude of readers for what was startling and reprehensible. It would give them—per contrast—an enhanced and pleasing sense of their own virtues. What a fermenting atom was man! What a kaleidoscopic affair was human life!

He paid his bill and went out. Observing that the main telegraph office was just across the road, he entered and sent a wire to Jim, as follows:

"Discount newspaper reports re Pacific Milling Company. No loss. Plans disarranged. Writing shortly."

As he came out, he half-unconsciously directed his steps toward Indian Hill. Reaching the top of it, he found a bench and sat down. The sky was overcast; no moon, no stars. Last evening he was here with *her*—under that wonderful sky! Now he was alone and in darkness. And this was his wedding night! Long he sat there absorbed in thought. He wondered if Margaret was finding any shelter from the storm which had burst upon her. Had she found anchorage for her soul, or was she being drowned in grief and despair? Doubtless her distress was more engulfing and her outlook more hopeless than his own. He had God and love to hold by. Had she lost her grip on these realities?

At length he rose and resumed his walk. He could never afterwards recall the route he traversed. He had dim recollections of passing mills and wharves and vessels; of exchanging greetings with night-policemen; of walking for a while in a wood; of being down on the shore of English Bay. He walked until pink pencil lines of light appeared in the eastern sky. In the white dawn of breaking day he reached his hotel and rang for the night-porter to let him in.

He went straight to bed and slept till seven

o'clock, when he was aroused by the ringing of the telephone in his room. It was Silcox speaking, inviting him to breakfast. It was necessary that they should confer at the earliest possible moment. Gordon promised to be at Bay View in half an hour.

Calling up the hotel office, he asked for a taxi to be ordered for him, and ten minutes later he was on his way.

Silcox had let no grass grow under his feet. In the early evening he had interviewed Myers at his own home. He was received at first with scant courtesy. Myers' face was like a thunder-cloud. He did not offer to shake hands.

"Take a seat," he said. "I hope you won't detain me long. I'm busy this evening—infernally busy and bothered, too, as you may imagine. I suppose you've come to plead for Pearson. It won't do any good, I can tell you right now. I have no sympathy for him. He deserves seven years. He's a rotter. We showed him every consideration—gave him every chance, but he bamboozled us at every turn. Put us in the deuce of a hole. Fortunately, it won't wreck us, but it will make it impossible to declare any dividends this year. It will hurt us in other ways, too—damage our credit and reputation, and so forth. Guess you aren't feeling very sweet about it yourself."

"I'm deeply distressed about it, Myers," an-

swered Silcox. "I haven't come to plead for him or to urge any excuses. I've simply come to give you this and to ask for a receipt."

He handed Myers a cheque for fifty thousand dollars. It was made payable to the Timber Milling Company. It was signed by Pearson and endorsed by Silcox.

As Myers scrutinized the cheque his face went crimson.

"Silcox, you simply astound me! This is the limit! It's magnificent, but it isn't business."

"I consider it very good business," replied Silcox quietly.

"But, won't this cramp you? I don't know how you stand, of course, but I guess you'll feel this a bit."

"That's all right. I can do it without going to the poorhouse as yet."

"Blast Pearson, I say!" stormed Myers. "Do you know that mad fool flung away thirty thousand dollars after we had discovered his shortage?—threw thirty thousand dollars into the fire during the six weeks we gave him in which to make good! That was sixty per cent of his deficit. Had he handed that over to the Company, we might have arranged a private settlement. But when we found out about that thirty thousand—"

"Yes, I know. Will you please write me a receipt?"

"Certainly, and I may add, with much pleasure

mingled with sincere regret. There you are—Received from Frederick Silcox—"

"No! Received from Arthur James Pearson, if you don't mind. That cheque is from him."

"Dash it all, so it is! But, I say, Silsox, I'm not quite sure that I ought to take this cheque, tonight. The case is out of our hands now. The Attorney-General, or Reed, his Deputy, rather, who will have the case in charge, may have something to say about this. Shouldn't the money be paid into court?"

"I don't think there's any technicality along that line that you need boggle at. But if I were in your place I'd take that cheque while the taking's good."

"Meaning by that—what?"

"Meaning that if you don't write out a receipt in full for the amount of Pearson's shortage, I'll take the cheque back and destroy it. By tomorrow, I may have developed writer's cramp and not be able to endorse another cheque, or I may even change my mind. Men are fickle creatures, you know."

"In other words, it's now or never, eh?"

"Something like that, maybe."

"Well, I'll take it and run the risk. At the most it can't involve us in more than a reprimand and, of course, it will make the situation a lot easier for Pearson. I'm sure we wish to have every consideration for your feelings. If it were possible, I'd have the case withdrawn. But it can't be done.

He has been arrested on a criminal charge and the fact that he committed a felony still remains."

Myers wrote out the receipt and handed it to Silcox.

"Thank you. Good-night."

"Good-night. I hope, for your sake, Silcox, they'll be light on Pearson. And, I say—I'm sorry about those young people. I didn't know about the wedding until just before you came in."

After this interview Pearson had an hour's consultation with his own lawyer. It was arranged that the latter should get in touch with Reed, the Deputy District-Attorney, as early as possible in the morning.

While they were taking breakfast, Silcox gave Gordon a detailed account of these proceedings.

"The case will be called before the stipendiary magistrate for hearing sometime this forenoon," he explained. "Arthur will have the option of being summarily tried by the stipendiary or of letting his case go to a jury. Should he ask for trial by jury we should have to wait six weeks until the Supreme Court sits. Scott, my lawyer, strongly advises that he ask for a summary trial. The stipendiary has as good a legal mind as any judge in Canada. The situation is perfectly clear and simple. Delay would only mean intolerable suspense. So I'm hoping the whole thing may be settled by noon, today. I hope you approve of the steps I have taken."

"Most heartily. You did a great evening's work."

The men sat in silence for a moment, then Gordon asked: "Has Mrs. Silcox told you the real reason why we didn't go to Victoria last evening?"

"Yes," replied Silcox. "I only saw her for a few minutes this morning and we didn't discuss the matter far. We both feel that Margaret has made a mistake. It puts you in a frightfully embarrassing position for the moment, but I feel sure when she has recovered from the first effects of this nasty knock she will take a more sensible view of it."

"I have serious doubts about it," returned Gordon. Presently he added, "I sent a telegram to Toronto last evening, telling the officers of my church that I wished to resign the pastorate forthwith."

"I don't think they'll accept your resignation."

"Yes, they will. They'll have to. I shall, of course, go to Toronto and have an interview with the church officials for the sake of a clear understanding. But I shall stand firmly by my resignation. I propose to go out of the ministry altogether for a while. I shall link up with Jim. He's been wanting me to go into partnership with him."

"But, Gordon, won't it pretty nearly break your heart to do that? You are considered the rising star of the Canadian pulpit."

"I'm more like a third-rate comet on its way to

oblivion. No, it won't break my heart, though I am not denying that it stabs me pretty deeply. But there's really nothing else to be done. You can see that plainly enough."

"Perhaps you are right; and if you can put your heart into the work Jim offers you, it will be well worth while. You'll come into big things, quick and strong."

They sat for some time discussing the outlook and what life on the ranch would mean for Gordon.

After a while Mrs. Silcox came into the room. Gordon was eager to hear of Margaret and to know when he could see her.

"She slept a little," Mrs. Silcox said; "troubled sleep, but better than none. She has already taken some breakfast. She is still in her room."

"Did she do anything about her trunks?" he asked.

"Yes, she unpacked them and put everything away. I thought it better not to remonstrate with her. You know she is in a terribly difficult position. The more I think about it the more complicated her problem appears. She has terrible facts and frightful possibilities to face whichever way she turns. She's certainly not seeking the line of least resistance. She will need all her courage."

"But is she not making it much harder for herself than need be? Isn't she making a tremendous mistake?"

"I thought so at first. But now it is difficult to

say. I feel she must decide her movements for herself, in accordance with her own intelligence and conscience. One thing I know; she won't shirk what appears to be her duty. Nor will she balk at suffering."

XIII

VERDICTS

AT eleven o'clock that forenoon, the stipendiary magistrate's clerk rose in the court and read out: "Arthur James Pearson, charged with unlawfully diverting to his own use certain moneys belonging to The Pacific Timber Milling Company and with intent to defraud."

Pearson stepped into the dock. It could be seen that he was feeling deeply the humiliation of his position. The court-room was crowded with spectators.

The magistrate leaned forward and looked at the prisoner keenly.

"Do you plead, guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty, on the first charge; not guilty, on the second."

"Do you elect to be summarily tried by me, or do you wish the case to go to a jury?"

"I wish to be tried by you."

"Is the counsel for the Crown ready to proceed?"

"Ready, your worship," said the Deputy Attorney-General. "May it please your worship, the prosecution is not now disposed to press the

charge of intent to defraud. This is due to the fact that since his arrest the accused has paid in to the Pacific Timber Milling Company the entire amount of his defalcation."

The stipendiary straightened himself in his chair.

"What was the amount involved?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"How was it returned?"

"By a cheque on the Bank of Commerce signed by Arthur James Pearson and endorsed by Frederick Silcox."

"Am I to understand that the cheque has been accepted?"

"Yes, and a receipt given."

"Then the Company has suffered no loss at all?"

"That is so."

Lawyer Scott passed a slip of paper to the Clerk, who in turn handed it to the Court. It was the receipt given by Myers. The magistrate scanned it closely. He then ordered Myers to step into the witness-box. The oath being administered, the stipendiary asked: "How long has the accused been in the employment of your company?"

"Seven years."

"Have you had any reason to complain of his conduct in matters relating to the company apart from the one we are now considering?"

"None whatever."

"How long is it since you knew of this shortage in his accounts?"

"A little over six weeks."

"Why did you not take action sooner?"

"Pearson promised to make good his defalcations in that length of time."

"In which event you were prepared to hush the matter up?"

"Yes."

There was silence for a moment and then the stipendiary said: "That will do. Stand down."

Myers stepped out of the box.

"Call Frederick Silcox!"

Silcox took the oath.

"Mr. Silcox, what relation do you bear to the accused?"

"He is my brother-in-law."

"Have you known him long?"

"All my life."

"Have you known anything to his discredit apart from this charge?"

"Nothing at all."

"Does this cheque represent anything in the way of a debt owing to him, a money debt, I mean?"

"No."

"Is it in the nature of a loan?"

"No. It will not appear against him in any of my accounts."

"Is it a gift?"

"Yes."

"Thank you! That is sufficient."

The magistrate asked Pearson if he desired to

give evidence on his own account. The reply was in the negative. The stipendiary then delivered his verdict and sentence.

"Arthur James Pearson, you have been guilty of a serious misdemeanour," he said briefly. "You will go to jail, a prisoner in the second division, for six calendar months."

The trial had lasted but a few minutes. Opinion was divided regarding the result. Many thought a heavier sentence should have been imposed. Others considered it sufficient and more than sufficient to serve the ends of justice.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the trial Gordon and Silcox left the court.

Three o'clock found Gordon at the Pearson home. Margaret came to him looking pale and stricken.

"Dearest!" he exclaimed, as he started towards her. She made a warning gesture with her hand. Being disposed to accommodate himself to her mood, he resumed his seat.

Her first words startled him. "It's a light sentence, isn't it?" she said.

"None too light," he replied.

"Yes, it's a light sentence, but the effect of it will last two lifetimes—his and mine," she continued.

There was a note of reproof in his tone as he said: "Please don't view everything in the gloomiest possible way! If you consider the sentence a

light one, why not try to get a little comfort out of the fact?"

"I *will* try," she replied meekly.

"Mr. Silcox has done a noble thing," he remarked.

"He has, indeed. It's wonderful. But for what he has done, the sentence might have run to four or five years. I can never be grateful enough. Of course, I shall repay the money when I get my legacy, but I can never repay the service he has rendered."

"That's true. And now, what about ourselves?"

"You must get a separation from me," she said. "I do not know the Canadian laws, but if there's any justice in them, you should be able to get an absolute divorce. Surely I'm giving sufficient cause: desertion and refusal of conjugal rights."

There was a catch in her voice as though the words choked her.

"I'm not disposed to listen to absurdities," he replied with a smile, "much less to discuss them. Will you come with me to the ranch? It is the only life I have to offer you now; but judging from some things you've said, I believe you'll like it. I'll do everything in my power to make you happy."

"Oh! don't torture me! A wife's happiness consists in seeing her husband happy. I didn't marry a ranchman: I married a preacher—a man made for high position and power with the people.

You would never be satisfied with life on a ranch. You would grieve your heart out. It ought not to satisfy you. It would be a tragedy if it did."

"I think I can be contented and happy if you'll come with me."

"And thus lose your soul?"

"I hope not."

"It would mean nothing less than that if you should be contented. You have no right to expect contentment in running a stock-farm. I'm not willing to stand by and watch you trying to kill the soul out of yourself in that way, day by day. It would be ghastly. But you wouldn't succeed. I think better of you than to believe you could succeed. You will feel yourself to be an exile from your true place and work."

"Supposing that to be the case, must a poor exile be denied the companionship of his wife—the woman who promised to love, honour and cherish him?"

"When he happens to be an exile because he inadvertently married a criminal's daughter, that woman can be of no comfort to him. But my hope is that after a while you may be able to take up your work again free from any encumbrance on my account. I can't just see how it may be brought about, but that is the hope I want to cling to."

"Don't speak of it as a hope, please! It's the mockery of hope. As I said yesterday, life without preaching may look like a second best to me; but

life without you will be no good at all. Margaret, dear, I don't want to rush you into anything. I'm willing you should take a reasonable amount of time to adjust yourself to the unhappy situation that has developed. I can see how baffled and bewildered you are by this sudden crash. Only, don't keep me waiting longer than you can help, please!"

She looked up at him piteously.

"Gordon," she said, "I must live in strict seclusion for the next six months, at least."

"I'm sure that's not the best thing for you," he answered, "but, if you insist upon it, I'll agree that our honeymoon shall begin six months from today. But I hope you may see your way clear to an earlier date."

"No, I can't agree to that! I can't promise anything! I may never be able to join you at all. I don't see how I can. I don't know what Father will be like when he comes out of prison. He will probably need me more than ever. I may have to take him to England."

"He could come on the ranch with us."

"No, he cannot. Remember, it is not your ranch! And remember, too, that time may make it no easier for me to—*forget!* I can consent to no agreement at all, except that you shall not raise any questions with me, but leave me entirely undisturbed for six months. At the end of that time I must be guided by circumstances and my judgment."

"Not forgetting your heart, I hope."

"Certainly not. My heart won't allow itself to be forgotten."

With much reluctance Kennedy consented to her stipulations.

"Will you live with the Silcoxes?" he asked.

"Yes. I shall give up this house and store the furniture."

"You must let me make you an allowance for living expenses. I want you to take some money now."

"No; I have more than sufficient. I shall have quite a sum to start with when Father comes back. I had a wedding present today from England. Grandfather Maxton sent me a bank draft for a thousand pounds."

"He must be very fond of you," Gordon said.

"He is. And he has plenty of money. But I dread to write and tell him the terrible truth. It will be a sad blow for him."

"Look here, Margaret! I've got a brain-wave. Why not go over to England for six months?"

"I've thought of that; but it's my duty to stay by Father."

"Yes, I suppose it is," he replied, after a moment's reflection. Then he added: "I shall be leaving for Toronto in a few hours."

"What an ordeal for you! No doubt the Toronto people read a sensational account of this affair at their breakfast tables this morning. How

they must be condemning me in their hearts! Have you fully decided to resign?"

"Yes. I wired them to that effect last evening. It won't take me long to wind up my affairs, cut the cable and slip away. I want to get to the ranch now, as soon as possible."

With that he rose to his feet.

She looked at him as if she were facing death.

"Are you going now?"

"Yes, dear."

"God help us!" she murmured.

"He will," replied Gordon.

She reached out her hands. He drew her tov him and kissed her. Then, without another he hurried away.

XIV

OLD TIES BROKEN

GORDON'S journey to Toronto was a dismal experience. He found the British Columbia end of it exceedingly depressing. On other occasions he had enjoyed the mountains, but now they gloomed and wearied him. Those colossal masses of bare rock had lost all beauty. They looked cold, cruel, threatening. The valleys were dark with shadows. Rank mists moved ghostlike among the heights—lifting, lowering, advancing, retreating—yet never disappearing from sight.

He dreaded the call to meals. He sat at a table by himself, taking his food in a perfunctory way. He spoke but little with his fellow passengers. At Calgary he posted a letter to Jim, telling him what had happened and informing him of his plans. From that point, everything recalled his former journey. Then all had been rosy, behind and in front of him. East and west glowed with light. He had now behind him a darkened west and before him a clouded east.

As he drew near Toronto he braced his will for what awaited him. He determined to show no hesitancy, no weakening of purpose. He would handle

this awkward business with dispatch. He did not intend to wear his heart on his sleeve. He was not returning to Toronto to be commiserated with. He had no favours to ask. His problem was his own and no one could help him solve it. Memorial Church would no doubt be sorry for him and sorry for itself. But Memorial Church, like himself, would want to get this matter over and done with as soon as possible.

Ontario was now sweating under a spell of mid-September heat. Many Rosemount families would still be away at their summer resorts. All the better; he would be accepting no social invitations and making no farewell visits.

The train rounded a curve and dashed towards Sunnyside. The scene appeared the same as on the day he left. The beach was crowded with bathers. The bay was alive with canoes, row-boats, motor-launches and sailing yachts. The high-diving boards were all in requisition. People were standing in line at the approaches to the ice-cream stalls and the counters where cold drinks were dispersed. Merry-go-rounds, swing-boats, switch-backs, flip-flaps and water-shoots were doing a roaring trade. In the pavilion people were dancing to the music of an orchestra. There was a mile or more of parked automobiles. He smiled as he reflected that this was merry Toronto. It pleased him to think there were so many people around who were able to enjoy themselves.

During his pastorate at Rosemount, Kennedy had been living at The Gravenhurst, a high-class private hotel in Sherbrook Street. His room there was paid for to the end of September. Although he had notified the proprietor of his intention to make a change of residence on his return, he took it for granted that the room would still be available.

Starbuck, the genial proprietor, was surprised to see him. He was sorry, but he had let the room a few days ago. He was sure Mr. Kennedy wouldn't blame him. The gentleman had engaged the room for six months and was paying rather more than Mr. Kennedy had done. Of course, he would be prepared to grant a rebate on the rent of the room until the end of the month. Mr. Kennedy's books remained undisturbed. His other effects had been removed to Starbuck's private quarters.

"It's all right, Starbuck," said Gordon. "I shouldn't like you to suffer any loss through me. I'll go to the King Edward."

The rotunda of the King Edward was a favourite rendezvous for the hotel guests—especially such of them as were commercial travellers and life insurance agents—and for men about town. Gordon wondered if he could get through it and up to the clerk's desk without being recognized. Perhaps in this small particular fortune might smile upon him. Fortune frowned. Gordon Kennedy was out of favour with fortune.

No sooner had he entered the rotunda than he

was spotted by "Nosey" Martin, his pet aversion. This aggressive individual was forever waylaying Kennedy. He was ubiquitous. Whether Kennedy was on a street-car, or attending a public meeting, or dining with the Rotary Club, Martin was sure to get him at close range, bombard him with questions and inundate him with his latest views upon religion and various occult matters. "Nosey" Martin knew worlds more than any sage of ancient or modern times. He knew of all things in earth and heaven. He could give you Napoleon's opinion of Marshal Foch. He could give you Erasmus on Dean Inge and describe the pattern of the trousers Gladstone was wearing in the other world! Beginning life as a Presbyterian, he had become in turn, a Unitarian, a Swedenborgian, a Christian Scientist and a Spiritualist. He believed in the onward and upward march of the human mind.

"Mr. Kennedy! Mr. Kennedy!" he cried. "I saw you coming in at the door. I'm glad to see you, but sorry for your trouble! It must have completely upset you. I don't see what you're going to do. Your people up at Rosemount . . ."

Gordon's eyes blazed with wrath.

"Martin, I'll be much obliged if you'll kindly mind your own business! I don't want any talk with you at all."

"Oh, Mr. Kennedy. I . . . I . . ." Gordon was out of hearing. He went to his room, threw off his coat and proceeded to wash. While

thus engaged there came a knock at his door. He called out: "Half a minute!"

When he opened the door there stood Martin.

"What, you again?"

"You'll excuse me, Mr. Kennedy, but I think you must have misunderstood what I said downstairs. You seemed to be offended with me. I didn't say anything out of the way, I was only intending to express my sympathy with you."

Kennedy's sense of humour came to his aid.

"All right, Martin, all right! Perhaps I didn't quite get the hang of what you were saying. But I was in a hurry and I'm in a hurry now."

"I wouldn't like you to think, Mr. Kennedy, that I'd throw an old friend over just because he had been unfortunate."

"No, Martin, I don't think anything like that."

"Well, I've been turning things over in my mind and it occurs to me that if you want a new line of work I might be able to use some influence with my firm."

"Thanks! Thanks very much; you'll really have to excuse me now. I haven't another minute to spare."

Martin reluctantly turned away, but presently wheeled round to say: "Think the matter over! If you'd like to talk with me about it, you'll find me in the rotunda when you come down."

A few minutes later there was another knock at the door. It was Pete Saunders, chief reporter for

The Daily Herald. He was recognized as the most enterprising knight of the notebook in the city. In former days he hadn't hesitated to call Kennedy out of bed at two in the morning to answer some inquiry over the telephone. Kennedy had never resented this, since Saunders was an agreeable fellow and had served him many a good turn. He was one of those rare reporters who know how to put the gist of a sermon or an address into a neat paragraph, and one of those still rarer reporters who would take the trouble to do it. If a man talked sense in the pulpit or on a public platform, Saunders never made him talk nonsense through the press. He was not one to magnify trifles or to suppress what was of real importance. Kennedy had been fond of him, but at this moment he would as soon see Mephisto as Pete Saunders.

"Well, I'm jiggered! Is this an interview, Pete, or have you come to tell me about the baby's new tooth?"

Pete grinned. His firstborn was nine months old.

"It's not to be any more of an interview than you want it to be, Mr. Kennedy. Whatever your wishes are, I shall respect them."

"Good! Now, Saunders, I'll give you, in one sentence, all I have for publication. I've come to Toronto to sever my connection with Memorial Church. That's the lot. You'll please not ask me any questions, but just accept my thanks for past

favours, shake hands with me and go away like a good boy."

"Correct! But just let me say that all the Toronto boys will be looking for you to do big things, bigger than ever."

"Thank you! Good old Pete!" exclaimed Gordon as he pushed him affectionately out of the room.

That evening's issue of *The Herald* merely reported the fact that the Rev. Gordon Kennedy had returned to the city and had registered at the King Edward hotel. Other papers had more to say. They referred to a rumour regarding his intention of resigning his pastorate. It was thought that he might now devote himself to literary pursuits; or, that he might enter politics. One paper had been informed that he contemplated going upon the stage.

Early in the evening Kennedy got into telephonic communication with Charlie Edwards, Treasurer of Memorial Church.

"That you, Charlie? This is Kennedy speaking."

"Hooray! Mighty good to hear your voice again, pastor. When did you get in? Where are you?"

"I'm at the King Edward."

"I'll come right down this minute. Say, I'll pick up Parr and McBain on the way, and we'll make a night of it."

"Wait a minute, Charlie. I'm not up to much just now in a social way. You know how glad I'd be to see you under other circumstances, but I fear it might be difficult to hit upon congenial topics of conversation this evening.

"Bunkum! What do you take us for? Guess there's a little imagination left in us yet. You can tell us something of your experiences on the ranch. McBain is just back from a fishing trip. Experiences and stories. All true ones. Old Parr is good for an hour on his own to tell how he just missed the golf championship. My own conversational powers have suffered no diminution during the holidays. I'm coming down in the car. Be there in half an hour."

"Very well. It's mighty good of you. Do you think a meeting of the official board can be arranged for tomorrow evening?"

"Hardly so soon. Better make it Friday. Can't get a full meeting even then. But why such hurry?"

"I'm not hurrying; merely proceeding with reasonable promptitude. Is Griffin in town?"

"I think so."

"Well, I'll 'phone him, and ask him to call the meeting for Friday evening."

Shardlow Griffin was chairman of the official board of Memorial Church. He had held the position for many years. Most people respected him for his character and work. He was a charter

member of the Church and thus had served with all its pastors. None of them had loved him, though all had recognized his worth. He was devoid of imagination, a born autocrat, proud and headstrong. In dealing with delicate matters he could always be trusted to say the wrong thing. When a situation developed with which it was difficult to deal, Griffin always made it *more* difficult. If the problem proved to be a thorny one, Griffin grew thorny, too. His judgment was often faulty. His intuition was that of a ground-hog. Yet he was sincerely devoted to the interests of Memorial Church, as he viewed them. He was conscientious, painstaking and moderately liberal with his money. He regarded himself as being, at once, the balance wheel and the king-pin of the official board.

This evening Kennedy scarcely recognized Griffin's voice when he answered over the 'phone. It sounded faint.

"Yes, Mr. Kennedy. Hope you're well." . . . "Yes, I think that can be arranged. The sooner, the better. I was intending to go to Montreal on Friday on important business, but I'll postpone it. The interests of the church mustn't be neglected."

Thus it was arranged that Kennedy should meet his official board on the third evening after his return.

Edwards and his friends lost no time in getting

down to the hotel, where they spent a pleasant evening. Not a word was said about church affairs, or about Kennedy's marriage. When the party was on the point of breaking up, Edwards said: "Pastor, I want you to spend tomorrow with me. We'll have a day's motoring; anywhere you say. Jackson's point, Niagara or any old place. Shall I call for you at nine or nine thirty?"

"Sorry, but I can't manage it, I shall be busy all day."

"Busy? How's that? You're still on holiday. You're not supposed to take up any work till the first of October."

Kennedy's face flushed.

"I shall be busy packing books."

"You'll not be doing any such fool thing! You'll come with me! I want you to. It will be doing me a big favour."

There was such a pleading note in Edwards' voice that Kennedy yielded.

"Very well," he said, "I'll come."

They had a delightful day. The roads were good and Edwards drove the car at a rapid pace. They went through the rich fruit district of the Niagara Peninsula and reached the Falls at noon. Here they lunched at The Hermitage. Later they drove to Chippewa and thence back to Toronto.

All through the day Kennedy was trying to screw his resolution up to the pitch required for telling Edwards just how matters stood. It was not until

they were taking tea at Hamilton on their return journey that he finally brought himself to the point. Then in a few quiet sentences he told of his difficulty.

Edwards was intensely sympathetic.

"It's pretty hard lines," he said. "I've realized how hard it would be for your wife to come here and take her place among us, but we're going to make it possible for her to do it. I reckon Memorial Church holds the key to the whole situation. We're not going to accept your resignation. You're coming back. We'll send Mrs. Kennedy a message from the board. When she finds out that she hasn't injured your career she'll take up a different attitude. She'll come along. You have nothing to fear. You'll weather this storm all right. Toronto will think more of you than ever when the whole truth of things comes out."

"No, Edwards, it can't be. There aren't many like you at Memorial. There's a good deal of pride around. The church would be divided. Things could never be the same as they have been. My wife and I should both be miserable. But it's no use discussing it. She won't consent to come, and I won't consent to stay. That's all there is to it."

"Well, I tell you right now, I believe that you're dead wrong, and I'm going to prove it to you."

"You'll do what I want you to do, won't you, Edwards?"

"I make no such promise. I reserve my right to do what I think to be best and right."

When Kennedy entered the board room, on Friday evening, he found nine men assembled. From six of them he received a cordial greeting—as in other days. Griffin was cool. He had invested himself with the air of a judge about to try a case before a jury. The hand he extended to Kennedy felt like a dead fish.

When the men had seated themselves Shardlow Griffin looked down at the toes of his boots for a moment. Then his glances wandered about the room—everywhere except toward the calm face of Gordon Kennedy. Presently he shifted in his chair and coughed. He coughed, although there was nothing wrong with his bronchial passages. It was a sort of preliminary cough, introductory to what he had to say. There was often a good deal of significance in Shardlow Griffin's coughs.

"I'm sure we all regret the circumstances which have brought us together this evening," he began. "They involve a serious interruption in the work of Memorial Church. None of us, I take it, feel disposed to criticize our minister harshly, for his conduct while on vacation. We appreciate the fact that he has taken prompt and commendable steps to repair, as far as he can, the injury which the church has suffered by his association with recent deplorable events. It only remains for us to act with

equal promptness. Perhaps that is all I need to say at the moment. We should like to hear Mr. Kennedy."

Scarlet streaks appeared in Kennedy's face as though he had been whip-lashed. He was about to speak when Edwards broke in.

"Shardlow Griffin, I've heard quite a few mean speeches from you since I've been a member of this Board, but for the quintessence of cussed meanness, that about takes the biscuit."

Griffin bridled.

"I haven't come here to be insulted, Edwards."

"Listen, Griffin! You started out by insulting Mr. Kennedy. Don't do it again! You've claimed to speak for this whole body of men. Don't do *that* again either! Before Mr. Kennedy says anything, I want him to understand that there are men in this room who love him with all their hearts. There are men in this room who owe him a debt they can never pay. I'm one of them. I want him for my pastor as long as I can have him. I need him. Memorial Church needs him. Toronto needs him. He's a bigger, stronger, nobler man than when he left for his vacation."

Edwards' words elicited the warm assent of the majority.

Parr was on his feet.

"I wish to associate myself with everything that Mr. Edwards has said. I move that we request Mr. Kennedy to go no further in the matter of his resig-

nation. He has done a distinguished work here and he can continue it."

"I heartily second that," said McBain.

"This is a time when we should stand together like men and Christians and uphold our minister. It's no time for getting cold feet, or for showing the white feather. We should recognize the fact that Memorial Church is now on trial. It has a chance to act like a truly Christian church by assuring our pastor and his wife of our united loyalty."

Kennedy was about to rise when Griffin intervened.

"I want it distinctly understood that I'm not against Mr. Kennedy in this matter," he said. "I've always been the friend of every minister this church has had ever since it was organized. But I'm sure the minister will admit that the interests of the church must be considered before the interests of the individual. If he should attempt to continue his ministry here under present conditions, he would find it a very difficult, if not an impossible undertaking. That's my opinion, and I'm bound to state it as an honest man. I'm willing to stand aside, if my views don't meet with general acceptance. I'm willing to resign my chairmanship and go off the board altogether. I . . ."

"Question! Question! Put the resolution," said Edwards, impatiently.

Then Kennedy's voice rang out.

"Gentlemen," he said in vibrant tones, "it's time you should listen to me. That resolution must never be put. I have come here to tender my resignation, and it must be accepted. I'm deeply grieved to have been the means of bringing trouble to Memorial Church. I want to take that trouble right away from it. I've had three happy years of work here, and during that time I have been loyally supported by every gentleman in this room. I came here fresh from college and without pastoral experience. You have been good to me. You have been like brothers and fathers to me. You have been blind to my faults and kind to my limitations. I thank you, one and all, from the bottom of my heart. I have one request to make—one favour to ask. It is, that you will be united among yourselves, unanimously accept my resignation and permit no dissension in the church on my account. That will be the greatest kindness you can show me. I don't think I can be of any further assistance to your proceedings this evening. I'll just say good-night and 'God bless you all!'"

Edwards' head was bowed. Other eyes were moist. Even Shardlow Griffin showed signs of emotion, as Kennedy left the room.

Then Griffin spoke.

"I should like to say that I think Mr. Kennedy has acted nobly," he said, "just like the honourable gentleman we have always known him to be. We shall all wish him every happiness and prosperity in

his future career. I want to suggest that Mr. Edwards, along with Mr. Parr and Mr. McBain, be a committee to prepare a suitable address and have it engraved and framed. I also move that the Treasurer be instructed to pay Mr. Kennedy's salary up to the end of December."

XV

A NEW DEPARTURE

JIM KENNEDY was a man who could put himself in another's place. He now put himself into Gordon's place, deeply pondering the troubles which had overtaken him and the problems they created. He feared this tidal wave of adversity might swamp him. It had caught him unawares and was dashing him against the rocks.

"Darn rough luck, Hobart," he said, "when a decent chap like Gordon gets it smack in the face like this!"

"Yes, it is. But some fellows get it in the back, and that's worse. They're on their face and down and out before they have a chance to see what's hit them."

"He's had it back and front," replied Jim. "Old Pearson gives him one in the spine and then the girl lands him in the face. Between the two of them, they smash up his work, knock him out of his job and ruin him for his profession. What a mess! I say, if the boy comes through this with his chin up and his chest out, he's some man."

"He'll do it, Jim. I'll stake my bottom dollar on it! I studied Gordon pretty closely when he

was here. He's got the courage of a lion," said Hobart.

"He's a sensitive chap," replied Jim, feelingly.

"True! He'll suffer the more because of that, but fight the better for it. You'll be a big help to him. He's lucky in having a brother like you."

"I'm going to help him all I can, Al. I intend to keep him moving. I shall make him jump lively when he gets out here. I'll pile work on him, open new interests to him and keep pressure on him all the while. Guess that's the sort of thing he needs."

Hobart assented and, for a time, the two men discussed certain new business plans which Jim's fertile mind had evolved.

"Guess you must have been staying awake these last few nights to get all this thought out," said Hobart at length.

"Haven't slept an awful lot," answered Jim, "but I don't need much sleep."

"Do you think we can wean him away from the girl?" he added.

"Do you want to do that?"

"Can't say that I do, altogether, if she's what he represents her to be, and I've no good reason for doubting it. She certainly has some pride and feels keenly about the mess she's got him into. But she should have done as he wished. She should have come here with him."

Hobart smiled.

"Do you think that either you or I know any-

thing about women?" he asked. "I'm sure *I* don't. Their minds work differently from ours. They see things under another light and in other proportions. Guess they must have another code of morals, too—one that's all their own."

"Life's much too short for me to search into the depths of the feminine mind: but I fancy women can be sometimes right when we're all wrong," replied Jim.

"Sure thing. And maybe Gordon's wife is taking the right step, now. Do you think this means that he will abandon the ministry altogether?"

"I hope so. It's a poor profession, after all."

"Well, as I view the matter, it's not a profession at all, but a calling—and a very noble calling at that," replied Hobart.

"Well, whatever it may be, I guess Gordon's out of it now. I wish you could stay on till he gets here. 'Twould help to buck him up."

"Sorry, but I must be off tomorrow. Don't worry about Gordon! He's in for a hard time, but he'll come through all right."

"If you must leave, I'll go as far as Calgary with you. I'm going to buy an automobile, the best one for prairie work that I can find. I should have had one sooner, but you know I've always been mighty fond of horses."

When the brothers met at Mandeville, a few days later, they clasped hands silently for a moment as

they looked searchingly into each other's faces. Then Jim's arm went round Gordon in a mighty hug.

"You're looking all right, boy. Been pommelled a bit, I reckon, but you're still in the saddle and fit for the next mile."

"Hope so! It hasn't been all rough riding."

"Glad to hear that. Mighty glad."

"A few jolts, of course, and the trail not always clear; but patience is a sound nag to ride. She pulls you through."

"That's the proper lingo! You've grasped the thistle, as your letters indicated you would do."

"Yes, and found honey in the thistles, too. Something to go on with. Have you brought Larkspur?"

"Not this time. Thought you'd be tired out, perhaps, so I brought a go-cart."

Gordon pulled up in surprise as Jim pointed to his new and powerful touring car.

"Climb in!" said Jim.

He started up the car. It glided forward swiftly, humming a low, even tune.

"Fine car!" remarked Gordon.

"Guess she's all right. Built specially for prairie work. Sixty horsepower."

"Must have cost you a pretty penny."

"Six thousand five hundred dollars. But we'll soon make her pay for herself. She'll save us a lot of time. Time means money and something more

than money to us just now. With this car we shall be able to do stacks of things we couldn't do before. She's a time-saver and a space-annihilator. From our central position she can land us almost anywhere in Alberta between dawn and dark."

"Can you work her in the winter?"

"Sure; straight through. We don't get much snow here, you know, and the frost only makes the going all the better."

As the car hummed along a flock of prairie chickens flew up from in front of the wheels.

"Good shooting now?" asked Gordon.

"Prime. We'll get a day or two at it pretty soon. Take you up to Puzzle Lake for the ducks. The water's black with them. Too busy this week. Two trainloads of cattle to be loaded for Chicago, immediately. Then there's to be a sale of breeding-stock over on Lord Elgin's ranch on Monday. It should pay us to pick up some of that stuff. That young man has his head screwed on the right way. Knows a good thing when he sees it. Whenever he gets the chance of a holiday he makes a bee-line for Alberta. I reckon he enjoys life on his ranch-bungalow quite as much as on his English estate. There's a whole lot of ranches we shall want to visit this fall and winter for the sake of buying in good breeding-stock. We can make a quick and profitable turn-over with young stuff of the right strain. We've got the best grass, the best water and the most sheltered position in Alberta. Presently

we shall breed high-grade bulls and heifers. Pots of money in it."

"Ambitious to be the Cattle King of Alberta, eh?"

"No, only ambitious to make the most of the magnificent opportunities we have here. From now on we'll go in more for quality than quantity. Pays better and is more interesting. Less hard grind about it."

They drove for a while without further conversation.

"My aim is to humanize this ranch life," Jim said after a time. "Instead of employing cow-punchers to chase wild cattle—the half-crazy creatures which now constitute the bulk of our Alberta herds—I want to settle families here, men with wives and children, living in real homes, men who know how to take care of well-bred stock. I want to see this region just as settled and domesticated as if it were all grain or orchard land. There's no good reason why it shouldn't be. I hope to see a school on this ranch one day, a school that will run all the year round. I want the building to be a roomy one, with two stories, schoolroom below, public hall above to serve the purposes of community life. How does it strike you?"

"I think it would be very fine."

"Guess if we had our anchors down in a little community of our own like that, at the same time swinging out and taking some part in national

affairs, we could make it spell 'Life.' Don't you think so?"

"Yes, and I tell you now I'm going to put myself into it for all I'm worth. I fully made up my mind to that on the way out."

"Good shot! And you won't be hankering after any more pulpits?"

"No. I've burned my bridges. I feel sure it's the best thing to do. I should only be making myself miserable if I held on to the idea of going back. I don't think it would be possible, anyway. The churches will stop thinking about me as soon as I begin to engage in this work. I'm already an ex-pastor; tomorrow I shall be a ranchman."

They sat for a while after supper, discussing details of ranch work.

"We haven't touched upon the Vancouver end of things yet," Jim said. "Now, you're not to say a word more about it than you want to, and not a word less. It's up to you to dismiss the whole matter and ban it from our conversations, or to talk it over with me if you feel like doing so."

"Thanks! I want to go into it with you, painful as it is. I'd like you to hear the whole thing so that you can have the situation clearly in your mind. I could only give you a bare outline of it in my letters."

The two men drew their chairs close together and talked in low tones for an hour. At the end of that time Jim said: "It's a knock-down for you and

nearly a knock-out for her. Guess there's nothing for it, just now, except to put your heart into this new work and wait for the next turn of the wheel."

"I don't know that I've got much heart in me at the moment," answered Gordon, "but I'm certainly going to put my back and my brains into work."

XVI

SETTLING DOWN TO RANCH LIFE

GORDON suggested to Jim that, for the first year, he should merely draw a moderate salary.

His brother flouted this idea.

"It's to be a partnership, and a genuine one," he said. "You've got eight thousand dollars. Put seven thousand of it into the business. Then you'll be entitled to three thousand a year as co-director, plus a fourth of the net profits."

After many protests on Gordon's part, this was finally agreed upon. They worked early and late. Every week they sent a shipment of cattle to Chicago. They drove hither and yon, visiting the best ranches in the Province to purchase high-grade breeding stock. This necessitated the building of a new barn, a work which was promptly undertaken and vigorously pushed forward. Since all building materials had to be brought from Mandeville and all shipments of cattle made at that point, these operations involved heavy labour for everyone about the place.

Rumours were now afloat to the effect that work on the new line of railway was likely to begin in the

early spring. Jim had been eagerly looking forward to the building of this road. It would clip off two hundred miles from the present haulage to Winnipeg and Chicago. There was to be a station on his own ranch—to be called "Kennedy." This would effect a great saving in labour, cheapen the cost of his supplies and enhance the value of his output. He had visions of a prosperous community growing up around him. He planned for the steady improvement of his methods and a big increase in the volume of his business.

"You're just in time to greet the new day that's about to dawn upon us here, Gordon," he said. "We'll be strictly in it from now on. If the ranch was a success under the old order of things, what will it be after this? Jove! We'll have a nice little town of our own growing up on our estate. Land will jump in value. We shall have every facility for business. The days of hard sledding will be over. We can make a mark here that the finger of time won't soon rub out."

It pleased Gordon to hear Jim in this strain, although his own enthusiasm was slow in kindling.

"I hope you're not thinking of a boom town here," he replied. "Boom towns soon go dead and leave their mourners behind them."

"There'll be no flash-in-the-pan about this. Just the solid, steady growth of an important industry. This business will last as long as people eat beef and wear boots."

While driving about on their business trips, Gordon learned much of the conditions of the country and he frequently discussed its prospects with his brother. Jim saw everything in a rosy light: Gordon took a more serious view of the situation.

"Look at these people in the Deadbrook district!" he would say. "Mostly Slavs, Russians, Polacks, Galicians! They farm badly and live filthily. It's a slice cut out of Southeastern Europe and flung down on this Western prairie. It hasn't changed its character. These people cling to their old habits, to their ignorance, their dirt, their superstitions, and their loose morality. What can you expect from them in the way of nation-building?"

"Not much," answered Jim, "but we can expect something from their children, and a whole lot more from their grandchildren. These types show improvement in the second generation. We have some of the latter already. They're doing well—farming intelligently; making money; proud of their citizenship. Three powerful influences are at work—private ownership, political franchise and the Government school. They soon do the trick. I bank on the school. Education will solve the problem that seems to be worrying you."

"I doubt it," replied Gordon.

"You needn't doubt it. It's like this: Our Immigration Department takes a bite out of Europe and chews it till the Crown Lands Department swallows it. Those processes land the settlers here. Then

the Government school steps in to provide the gastric juices required to complete the business. The school is the digestive organ in the body politic. It gets to work and the children begin to speak English, think Canadian and act Alberta. The young fellows who come out here to teach are keen as mustard and all of them one hundred per cent Canadian. Old world notions are knocked on the head; superstitions are exploded; ambitions are aroused. Presently you have communities of intelligent pushing, successful Canadians.

"Look at the Rumbling River district, where the first immigrants settled twenty-five years ago! They were a mixed lot—Russians, Poles, Norwegians, with a sprinkling of Irish peasants and Scotch crofters. They were all poor, ignorant and superstitious. Already you can note a wonderful change. In fact, it's a transformation. Rumbling River is progressive, it's well-to-do, it's Canadian."

"Yes," said Gordon, "and materialistic to the core. You've got a better type of human animal than you had, but that's all! To be sure, you've stripped them of their superstitions, but have you put anything of real value in their place? It's a godless region. There's no sign of religion among them. Their God is their belly. It hit me pretty hard when we were doing that district to learn that no sort of religious service is ever conducted there. But it explains some things. I don't underestimate what the school can do. It can stimulate and direct

mental activity, but it can't keep the soul of a people alive."

"I suppose you think the churches should step in and get the people quarrelling about religious dogmas," said Jim sarcastically.

"I think someone should step in to remind those people of God," replied Gordon.

Jim smiled. "You know I'm not against religion; but haven't these people got enough to remind them of the Almighty without the preachers barging in? Can't they see God in Nature? They need only to step out of doors to do that, it seems to me. Look there!" He pointed to the Rockies, now a massive wall of amethyst.

"The same could have been said of Greece and Rome. Yet they rotted to the bone," remarked Gordon.

Jim was silent for a moment. Then he said with a smile: "Well, I guess that's right. History has a nasty way of knocking my theories on the head, every now and then."

Gordon laid his hand on his brother's knee.

"And don't we read of a certain man—a man of culture, genius and position—who thought it worth while to risk his life in Athens and who did lay down his life in Rome in attempting to make those people aware of God? When we read of that man we feel respect and admiration and gratitude for him. He has put all the ages in his debt."

"Circumstances alter cases," Jim drawled out.

"That man had grown tired of living with a disagreeable wife and he hadn't the attractions of an Alberta ranch behind him."

Towards the end of October Gordon received a letter from Silcox stating that he was about to tender for the contract to build the new railroad and wanted to look over the ground in order to prepare his estimates, which must be submitted by the end of November. Should he get the contract it would be one of the largest he had handled, and should it turn out favourably, it would probably be his last. Could they accommodate him at the ranch for a few nights?

The letter was welcomed by the Kennedys on more than one count and they wired a hearty invitation for him to come.

While they were driving him to the ranch, a few days later, Silcox was keenly observing the configuration of the country and the character of the soil. It was characteristic Alberta prairie—undulating meadows, with rounded sloping ridges covered with short thick grass. Two miles from the bungalow they struck a stretch of superior road.

"Gravel!" Silcox suddenly exclaimed. "Looks like a good specimen, too. Would you mind holding up for a minute?"

Jim stopped the car. Silcox got out and gathered a handful of gravel from the side of the road.

"Got much of this?" he asked.

"No end of it," answered Jim. "I should think there's a square mile of it."

"Who owns it?"

"We do. We're on our own land now."

Silcox's face beamed.

"It's gold-dust, my friend," he said.

Jim raised his eyebrows.

"It will be the ideal stuff for ballasting the new road," said Silcox.

"So far as I know, it's the only block of gravel on the whole line," said Jim. "We can open up pits right beside the track."

Silcox whistled. "It should be worth nearly as much as all the rest of your land, just now. It solves the biggest problem we have to face in our prairie work. We can ballast the whole road from here."

"Well, I only hope you get that contract," said Jim. "I don't see why you shouldn't."

"I'm expecting to get it. I've built for the Company before."

"Then let's make a sure thing of it straight off! If Gordon agrees, we'll convey to you the sole right to lift gravel from this ranch for, shall we say, the next two years. You can have it at your own price. That ought to put the contract slap into your mit."

"It will do that, Kennedy, without a doubt."

"Very well; you shall have the agreement in writing this evening. Gordon is interested in this,

too, because he is standing in with me on a twenty-five per cent basis."

Silcox took a notebook from his pocket. After doing a little figuring he said: "At what I consider a fair price per ton, for the gravel, it should bring you in not less than sixty thousand dollars, without you putting a hand to it. It will be worth that to me where it lies."

Jim glanced at Gordon.

"What do you say, partner?"

"Great; but I don't come in on this, do I? Our agreement doesn't mention anything about sharing in the value of your real estate."

"It gives you a fourth share in all the profits made on this ranch."

"But this isn't strictly profits. You're selling Mr. Silcox a part of your ranch. Gravel is land."

"No, it isn't. It's mineral. If we should open and operate a coal-mine here, wouldn't that come in under our contract?"

"Perhaps so. I don't know."

"Then leave it to me. I *do*."

"Well, I'm not going to argue the point or be disagreeable about it. It isn't every day that Mother Earth opens her heart and pours gold into a fellow's pocket in this prodigal way. I only hope that Mr. Silcox will do well out of it."

"I'm going to do more than well," answered Silcox. "By getting the ballast for the whole road right here, at my own price, I shall easily make

fifty thousand dollars over and above what I expected to make on the contract, while the Company will be getting a superior road."

Gordon looked at him earnestly. "Fifty thousand dollars!" he said; "that's good news."

The agreement was signed that evening. Early in December, Silcox received the contract for the building of the road.

XVII

FINDING A SIDE-LINE

CHRISTMAS Day fell on Sunday that year. It was a day of brilliant sunshine. In the grip of the frost king, Moon River had stiffened into a blue serpent of ice. Under their light coating of snow the prairie grasses resembled powdered hair. The distant Rockies loomed against the horizon like a line of colossal warriors in battle array, accoutred in long, black boots, slashing belts of scarlet crimson tunics, and snow-white helmets. The sky was a faultless violet lake on which no tiniest cloud-craft ventured forth the livelong day. The air was a nectar of which men's lungs delighted to drink deeply.

For the ranchmen, the day began with cold tubs in the corridor of the dormitory. With blow of heel or fist they broke the ice which had formed overnight, carefully skimming it away lest presently the water should turn red from their gashed legs. This was a lively half-hour. The place resounded with loud snortings and shrill outcries as the bathers squeezed sponges of ice-water over their heads or flung handfuls of it in each other's faces. Gleeful yells broke out when Davie Evans discovered a

calf's head in his tub. But this was nothing in comparison with the ovation accorded "Prickly" Peters when he fished from his tub a deceased porcupine awaiting belated burial.

Breakfast was a hearty meal. The men had fried ham and eggs, hot mince pies—meaty and juicy—rolls and coffee. They spent the forenoon according to their preferences. A number of them went skating. Some pitched quoits. Several engaged in rifle practice. Others played chess or wrote letters, or shingled each other's hair.

They had a sumptuous dinner. The bill of fare included roast turkey, duck and prairie chicken, cooked to perfection. The appearance of the plum-pudding was the sign for a lusty shout before they fell to. The men fed themselves into quiescence. For an hour after dinner they were content to smoke and snooze in their chairs. Then they livened up again and began to pull each other about in different sorts of horseplay. Later on, there was an hour or more when time dragged heavily. This was the part of the day when the men became reminiscent and began to mask their feelings. Some would lie on their beds for a while. One and another would quietly steal away and go for a lonely walk. Each one knew the other was thinking of other Christmas Days and wondering how this day was being spent by the folks at home, in merrie England or bonnie Scotland, or perhaps, in the old home in Ontario or Nova Scotia.

The men were all invited to the bungalow, for the evening. Here the big table in the dining-room was loaded with delicacies. There was to be no standing on ceremony. The men were made free of everything. There were no alcoholic drinks, but everything else that men could reasonably desire was there in abundance.

The day proved to be a trying one for Gordon. He had never spent such a Sunday, and it was strangely different from any former Christmas Day of his life. In the morning he went for a long ride on Larkspur, accompanied by Jim on Gipsy Queen. The afternoon he spent in his room. For a time he read, and then, moved by a sudden impulse, he took pen and paper and began to write. He worked rapidly. The pages quickly grew into a little mound beside him as he ripped sheet after sheet from the writing-pad and piled them on top of one another. It was not a letter, nor an essay, nor a sermon that he was writing, but just his thoughts about himself and his inner life. He gave no heed to the sequence of his sentences. He simply let his soul flow unobstructed through his pen.

"Stagnation! I know its destiny!" he wrote. "When I see the black pool sleeping in its hollow among the prairie mounds, I know it to be a thing of death; it is doomed to rottenness and extinction. But when I see the silver ribbon flashing yonder on the mountain-side, a streamlet starting on its journey to the sea, I dare not utter prophecies concern-

ing its career. I cannot tell what forces it may gather to itself as it winds down through the valleys and across the plains. I am unable to foretell what purposes it may come to serve, what wealth of cities and of nations it may carry on its bosom as it answers to the call of the deep, and rushes on to join that blue immensity."

Then his thoughts took a different turn, and his pen raced across the paper as he wrote:

"A wasted life? No life is wasted if lived sincerely and with earnestness. No life is wasted that holds by truth and does the duty that lies next it."

His hand rested for a moment. Then, resuming, from beneath his pen these words stood out:

"Conviction is more than opinion; it is persuasion. It is a living, moving, stirring sense of truth and duty. It sets up mental friction, moral discontent, spiritual unrest and desire. We speak of the courage of conviction as though it was some rare and shining virtue. It is not that. We men do have the courage of our convictions. Our weakness lies in the fact that we have so few convictions to make us courageous."

Once again, he wrote:

"Conscience and love! How often they seem to be in conflict, working at cross purposes! This is tragedy. While love says 'stay,' conscience bids us 'go.' Or love will call 'depart' while conscience cries 'remain.' Which has the higher claim to be obeyed? Which is the soul's true king? Why

may not these two work hand in hand to lead the soul up to life's shining tablelands? What malignance has set up this rivalry? It is a sore and crippling experience when love stamps on conscience; but it is a cruel and killing work when conscience draws a sword and thrusts it through the breast of love."

When he had finished writing, he gathered up the pages and threw them into the fire.

Gordon spent the evening with Jim among the men, entering into all their fun and joining in the games. He cracked jokes, told humorous stories and kept up a running fire of sparkling conversation to the end.

When the men had gone, Jim said: "Now, that's what I call a bang-up, decent, enjoyable, ranch Christmas. You've done your part well. I appreciate it. I reckon the boys had a jolly good time."

Gordon made no reply, but looked gravely and sadly into his brother's eyes. Jim winced.

"Don't you agree with me?" asked Jim.

"No. I think it has been a farce—a poor, petty peepshow. There's been nothing of the real essence of Christmas in it."

Jim's face clouded. He had never heard Gordon speak like that before.

"I'm sorry, Boy, if you feel that way about it," he said. "I thought it was a success and that you enjoyed it as much as the men. It has been a day

of sociability and friendliness. Seems to me there's a bit of Christmas essence in that."

"You seem to forget that this is not only Christmas Day: it's Sunday."

"Oh, I see! You felt we were desecrating the Sabbath. Is that it?"

"Yes. At least, *I've* been desecrating it and desecrating myself. I'm the one that's to blame. It was up to me to bring into this day some reminders of Bethlehem and what it means to the world. I would have liked the men invited to a brief religious service at eleven o'clock this forenoon."

"Well, why didn't you suggest it? You knew I wouldn't have put anything in the way of it. But I thought you had cut preaching out of your programme."

"That's just it," returned Gordon. "Because I knew you were thinking so, and because I had thought so myself for a while, I was too much of a coward to speak of what I had in mind. But, look here, Jim! I can't go on like this! I'm not a pastor any more and I never can be again. But I hope I'm a Christian man. In the sight of God, and in my own heart, I'm a preacher still. I've got to remember that and live up to it, or I'll lose my soul. My Sundays on the ranch, up to now, would disgrace a pagan. I want a change. I should like to hold a religious service for the men every Sunday I'm at home. And I'm going to get out among the settlements and conduct services in the school-houses.

Will you let me have the use of the car for that?"

"Certainly. You have a free hand. Just go ahead and do whatever you like—whatever is necessary to make you happy and contented. That's the main point with me just now."

"It shouldn't be. Here you are with your mind full of big schemes for the improvement of the region and yet blind to the greatest need of all. I tell you, Jim, no country can long continue morally sound after it has lost religious faith. And you can't sustain religious faith without religious instruction. In that regard this Northwest country is one of the great waste places of the world. Just think of it! We have some thousands of school sections in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta where no sort of public religious teaching is given. That's the slug at the root of our life out here. It may work our ruin."

"I suppose the situation *is* rather serious from that viewpoint," admitted Jim.

"I wonder if you realize *how* serious it is! There's practically no preaching of the Truth and very little good literature being circulated around here, and all the while fanatical and deadly doctrines are being broadcasted like thistledown over the country from the printing presses of Chicago, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. We'll pay for it through the nose some day if we don't do something to counteract the rot that's setting in."

Jim pondered for a while before answering. Then he said: "All that you can do in your spare time won't amount to much. It will be like trying to sweep back the tide with a broom."

"I know it. The situation must be tackled on a big scale. If I'd only had this on my mind and heart when I was in Toronto—as I have now—I might have done something. There, I was in touch with men of money, on the one hand, and with students entering the ministry, on the other. I had a chance there that will never come my way again."

Jim was perturbed for a time. But the more he reflected upon the matter the more reconciled he became to this new enthusiasm of Gordon's. It was just what he might have expected from a genuine chap like his brother, he told himself. Evidently his heart had been more in the ministry than Jim had realized. In that case an occasional resurgence of the passion for preaching was inevitable. Fortunately, the opportunities for giving vent to it lay all around them. He could name a score of places accessible by automobile where considerable companies of people would flock to hear Gordon preach. Let him have his fling! It would do good to the settlers, and it would do Gordon good. It was just the one element needing to be imported into this new life to make it a satisfactory substitute for the one he had left behind.

Thus it came about that Gordon Kennedy, the

erstwhile Toronto pulpit star, became an itinerant prairie missionary. There were few Sundays when he did not go abroad on his self-imposed task. It was no unusual thing for him to travel a hundred miles and conduct three services in a day.

Davie Evans accompanied him on the first of these journeys to drive the car and lead the singing. Gordon asked him to give a solo. He had a voice that could touch the deepest chords of men's hearts and he put his soul into his singing.

On their way home at the close of the day's efforts, Gordon said: "Davie, you're a godsend! I reckon your songs will get right down into the middle of these chaps' souls."

These words thrilled the little Welshman as nothing had done for years. He quivered with delight.

"If you really think so," he burst out in his excitement, "then I'm with you for always and for all I'm worth. It's great business. These people are hard as rocks; but you've got the dynamite. Keep on as you were doing this evening, and you'll blow the devil out of 'em."

"I reckon you've got the right idea, Davie. That's just what we should be trying to do. A good many of them look as if they were carrying him around inside them. Our stunt is to knock him out. And I want you to know this, Davie," he added: "You've got to fight harder than ever now, for my sake. I need you. You're my right-

hand man. We're partners in this business and I'd be stranded without you."

The people of the settlements turned out in force and crowded the school-houses which Gordon visited. His coming was regarded as a compliment. The Kennedy ranch and its owner were well known and held in high repute all over the region. When it became known—and the knowledge soon spread—that Gordon Kennedy, the noted Toronto preacher, and brother of Jim Kennedy of Black Gulch, was to conduct public worship, the communities determined to give him a fitting reception. His coming was interpreted as a mark of esteem and welcomed as a pleasant break in the humdrum of life. With these people, Sunday differed little, if at all, from other days of the week, and the weeks, especially in winter, stretched themselves out in drab and monotonous succession.

At first, Gordon began with simple, unconventional talks followed by questions asked by his audiences. These questions soon gave him his true line and led him to change his method. He found that the only themes which interested the people were the greatest themes. To these he turned, dealing with them in the most thoroughgoing way of which he was capable. He brooded over them as he went about his daily work and spent his evenings putting his thoughts in order and writing them out in simple, vivid language. He had never worked harder—even at Memorial Church. The result

was the awakening of considerable interest in religious matters. It was not only an intellectual interest; in many cases there were evidences of deep spiritual concern and a reaching-out for better things.

"We're doing spade-work this winter, Davie," he said. "Spade-work and seeding. Next winter we ought to see a real sprouting. If only we hadn't to spread the work out over so wide a field! There's work enough within our circuit to keep at least three men busy all the time."

There were Sundays when Gordon could not get back to the ranch before midnight. He would come in tired and cold. On one of these occasions Jim blazed out at him.

"I say, Gordon, you're overdoing this business altogether. You've got to let up. You'll be ill presently. No man can work seven days a week at your pace and stand up under it. You're showing signs of strain and the next thing you know you'll be down with pneumonia or some other rotten thing. You've done enough at this missionary stunt. Cut it out—at least, for the present."

"Sorry to oppose your wishes, Jim, but I can't do it."

"Why not? Do you think you're converting the heathen population of this country? Do you imagine that you're snatching brands from the burning and winning stars for your crown?"

"No—nothing of that sort. But I'm doing a

little good to the people and I'm doing a whole lot of good to myself."

"In what way?"

"Keeping on fairly comfortable terms with my conscience."

"That's your old song."

"And it's a true song. Another cup of tea, please! It tastes good tonight."

Jim poured the tea and urged more food upon his brother. Then he sat and watched him with a look of tenderness in his deep-set eyes.

"Gordon, old boy," he said, "I know this is a terribly hard winter for you. It's rotten! Everybody seems to be making life hard and harder for you just now. I'm not doing anything to help you. And there's Margaret—a drag on the wheels when she should be pulling in the traces with you. It's time that young lady was ambling out to the ranch."

"Cut that out, Jim!"

"I won't cut it out. It's a rotten shame! Marriage is supposed to mean something to a man, but in your case it's nothing—neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring. Am I to conclude that Margaret's reticence is due to the fact that she's also trying to keep on comfortable terms with her conscience?"

"I think that may be the way to look at it."

"Well, it strikes me that you people are much too strenuous along that line. You're both overwound. However, since you're the only brother

I've got and she's my only sister, I suppose I'll have to put up with the pair of you, until you come to your senses."

Jim stalked about the room blowing clouds of tobacco smoke from his mouth. At length he stopped and confronted his brother.

"You don't know how much I want to see this place converted into a real home, Boy," he said. "You've got the goods for that in Margaret. She could do great things for the whole bunch of us. The men would worship her. She could rule this ranch like a queen. . . . And just think what it would mean to have a few kiddies playing around here!"

"It's a pretty picture, I admit," said Gordon.

XVIII

DAVIE'S TRIUMPH

MARCH had always been a bad month for Davie Evans. He dreaded it. It was not the only month in the year that brought him trouble, but it was the worst. He got the idea into his head that March would sometime witness his final undoing. Whether it was that the strong suns quickened the dormant demon within him, or that the high winds blew a wildness into his brain, the month was for him a time of peril. Ferguson would then increase his watchfulness. He remembered that it was on a March day he had once found Davie, blue and shaky, trying to sing in the doorway of a Calgary saloon in the hope that someone might give him the price of another glass of whiskey. He remembered that it was also on a day in March when he had traced him to Edmonton Police Station where, in wild-eyed terror, he was crouching in a corner begging the warder to shoot the wildcat that he imagined to be prowling about the room.

Ferguson could usually tell when the spells were coming on. Davie would drop his habitual gaiety and grow silent and morose. A furtive look would

come into his eyes. It was evident that he was watching for an opportunity to elude his mates and escape from the ranch. At these times Ferguson would have him shadowed day and night. The night duty he took upon himself, since his bed in the dormitory was next to that of Davie. On more than one occasion he would pretend to be sound asleep, while all the time he was watching Davie as he silently slid from his cot and tried to sneak away. Then Ferguson would pounce upon him like a hawk on a sparrow and proceed to tie him up.

It was now six months since Davie had felt the slightest craving for alcohol. This was the longest period of freedom he had known since boyhood. Ferguson's confidence increased from month to month.

"You're comin' on fine, Davie!" he would say. "I shouldna' be surprised if you never had another bout wi' the old enemy. I reckon he's dead. You ken the spells have been growin' fewer for a long time, and now it looks as if you'd got the victory. Mon, I believe you've overcome."

"I don't dare to think so, Fergy," Davie would say. "You see, I've never overcome by myself yet. You've done the overcoming for me. I've always gone under when it's been a straight fight between me and the drink. And there's another thing that troubles me. Though the outbreaks have grown fewer, they're worse when they do come. You remember what a raving maniac I was that last time

when you put me in the ropes. When I got away then I would have drunk myself to death, if you hadn't found me so soon. I started out by drinking a half-pint of raw whiskey without taking the bottle from my lips. I finished the full bottle in an hour. It was a wonder it didn't kill me."

"You'll never do anything like that again, Davie; not after what you've been through this winter with Gordon Kennedy. You've been singin' the souls of your fellow-men right up to the gates of heaven. You've been makin' your callin' and election sure. If you're e'er tempted to break away again, you'll find a mighty lot of obstacles piled up in front of you. You'll be thinkin' of all those people who listened to your singin'. You'll be thinkin' of Mr. Gordon and all his pride in you and gratitude for what you've done. Mon, you canna' leap over all them obstacles, and run light-footed to the devil."

But there came one night—a night of storm and darkness on the prairie and a night of darkness and storm in the soul of Davie Evans—when without having given the slightest warning of impending downfall, he slipped away. The craving came upon him suddenly, at midnight. It smote him with demoniacal fury, smothering at once his reason and his conscience. With unholy cleverness he managed to get into his clothes and creep from the dormitory, unseen and unheard. There was no creaking of a floorboard or grating of a doorhinge

to wake the lightest sleeper. Within a few minutes of the time when his demon clutched him, he was out and away, full speed for Mandeville.

"Ha!" he cried, as he clapped his hands in glee: "Tricked 'em! Caught 'em napping! Left 'em in the lurch!"

The wind was at his back, blowing with mighty force and sweeping him along at a swift pace. His feet pattered lightly over the floor of the "Arrow" trail. This was the shorter though rougher way to his destination. A train would be leaving Mandeville for Calgary at four in the morning. He could board that train and be well away before they would miss him from the ranch. No power on earth could now prevent him from indulging in a glorious orgy. To hades with Ferguson and his thongs! He was free, and master of his own fate.

Whiskey! Whiskey good and strong! Not whiskey paled, enfeebled and deadened with water, but the strong potent nectar that warmed the heart, painted glowing pictures on the brain and gave a man ten times his natural strength! Could there be anything on earth like whiskey? There was music in it as it gurgled from the bottle. In the pulses, it was life. In the brain, it was ecstasy. Davie broke out into singing:

"Whiskey is the life of man,
Whiskey, Johnnie!
Whiskey killed my uncle Sam,
Whiskey for my Johnnie!"

The night grew darker and the wind increased in force. He stumbled and nearly fell. Somehow, he had left the trail. It mattered little. He knew the general direction. He had only to go with the wind. When he had been an hour on the road he reckoned he had covered five miles.

But what was that weird sound? Surely it was someone calling his name from far away. Had he been missed? Was Ferguson racing to catch him? It sounded like a long-drawn-out plaintive cry of "Da-vie!" He listened intently. There it was again! But now he knew it was only a trick of the wind blowing through a clump of shaggy trees. He laughed aloud and pushed on.

Presently he halted. Was he going in the right direction? Yes, this was the way to Mandeville and to Calgary. Ah! But was it not also the way to hell . . .? He realized it now. His feet had taken hold upon destruction. He was rushing to damnation. His body would soon be lying in a drunkard's grave and his soul— Could he not turn back? Yes—he *would* go back. He *must* go back. Fergy was right about the obstacles he would find in his way. He was up against them now. He was remembering all the things that Fergy had said, and more. He was hearing Mr. Gordon saying, "You're not going to fill a drunkard's grave! You're going to end your days in honour! You're a man!"

He turned and faced the wind. He would battle

with this storm—with both these storms—the storm without and the storm within. He would overcome. For a few moments he pressed on against the wind, then suddenly wheeled and went the other way. But now he was no longer walking on frozen ground but on warm bleeding human hearts.

Presently he halted again and gave a mighty cry.

"I can't do it! I can't go back!" he cried. "God Almighty, you know I can't—unless you help me. Help me, please! It's now or never! I want to overcome. I don't want to go down trampling on those loving hearts. But I'm not a man. Mr. Gordon was wrong. I'm no man, I'm a rag. I'm a feather blown about by the wind. Put will-power into me! Take me by the hand and lead me back."

The prayer was answered; for now Davie Evans was no longer a creature of two minds, but a man whose mind was all of one piece—of firm desire and solid determination. He bowed his head to the storm and started on his dark and stumbling journey home. Presently his soul began to taste a wonderful sweetness. This was his first real victory. He believed it would prove to be the utter rout of the enemy. He felt that he had not only won a battle, but ended a war. His soul grew jubilant. He began to sing, a verse he had so often sung during the winter to the ranchmen in the school-houses:

"Fight the good fight with all thy might.
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally."

For upwards of an hour he battled on, swaying, stumbling, bending before the storm, yet frequently breaking into song. It was a night of tumult, yet for Davie Evans a night of triumph.

His soul had struck its topmost note. His body was on earth in grim contention with earthly forces as he strained his muscles and screwed his way forward against the whistling cold night wind; but his spirit was ranging free and far. In the inky blackness of the night he was unable to see his hand before him. He had no path for his feet; but he knew that, unless the wind had veered, he could not go far wrong if he kept pressing dead against it.

He would be at the ranch before the men were astir. Perhaps he could get back to bed without arousing anyone. One day he would tell Fergy about it. But not yet. At present it must remain a secret, a precious secret between himself and the Almighty.

Was there ever a wind so wild or a night so black? He was growing tired. He began to sing again. He felt safer and stronger as he sang,

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!"

Then, suddenly, he stepped into vacancy. The next instant he crashed to the bottom of Black Gulch, and into oblivion.

An hour-and-a-half after Davie's departure Ferguson awoke with a start. He thought he heard someone calling his name. He sat up and looked about him. Glancing at Davie's cot and observing that it was empty, he sprang to his feet and hustled into his clothes. This was not the sort of night in which Davie could serenade the stars, for no stars were to be seen. He felt the bedding. It was cold. It was plain, too, that the man had gone out fully dressed. Though he had observed no signs of an approaching conflict, Ferguson jumped at once to the conclusion that his friend had fallen suddenly into the grip of his old enemy.

He hurried out and saddled a horse. Before taking the road to Mandeville he dismounted at the bungalow to rap on Gordon Kennedy's window. Kennedy being a sound sleeper, it was some little time before he could elicit a response. At length the window opened.

"Hello, Ferguson! What's up?"

"Davie's awa'," replied the Scot.

"Surely not! On a night like this? He must be somewhere about the place. You haven't noticed anything being wrong with him recently?"

"Naethin' whatever. But he's gone. It's the wiles of Satan we have to contend with, I'm

thinkin'. There's a train leavin' Mandeville at four, ye ken. I'll just be joggin' on to meet it. There's no' much time to spare, the nicht being what it is. I thought I'd better tell ye how the land lies."

"Did Davie take a horse?" asked Kennedy.

"No. There's not a nag missin'. He's afoot."

"Could he cover the distance to Mandeville in the dark and the storm in time to catch that train?"

"'The feet of men are swift when they take hold on destruction'; or it may be Davie's ridin' on the verra wings of death. I'll be gettin' on now."

Ferguson disappeared into the darkness. Kennedy turned and found Laddie at his side. He struck a light and began to dress.

"Laddie, boy," he said, "I reckon there's work for you and me this night."

In a few sharp barks the dog indicated his agreement.

"Your friend Davie is in trouble, Laddie,—in sore trouble," said Kennedy in a melancholy tone. Laddie uttered a low, sympathetic moan.

It took Kennedy but a few minutes to make ready for his undertaking. Leaving the bungalow, he went to the dormitory and quietly crept to Davie's cot. He felt around until he found the Welshman's riding-boots.

"Here, Laddie," he ordered, "sniff 'em! Smell

'em good!" The dog thrust his nose into the leg of a boot and breathed hard. He did the same with the second boot. Then he lifted his head high and whined. Kennedy proceeded to the stable, where he saddled Larkspur. Meanwhile, Laddie was running to and fro and yelping wildly.

When Kennedy was ready, the dog immediately led off. With nose skimming the ground he trotted along the Arrow trail, Larkspur at his heels. It was rough going as the path swam darkly forward over the undulations of the prairie. Kennedy held Larkspur's rein in a careful hand. For a full half-hour Laddie went on steadily; then he suddenly stopped—and barked. He ran to and fro, nosing around on right and left. On the wings of the night-wind came a sound like the cry of a human being in distress. It was the distant baying of a prairie wolf.

Presently the dog picked up the scent again and led off on an angle from the trail. After a time he halted again and turned sharply around, taking a course nearly parallel to the one he had been following.

"Good little Davie!" mused Kennedy. "He has won his fight. We'll find him at the ranch. He heard the homeward call."

And now against the cutting wind they pressed their way at a slackened pace. Snorting and shaking his head and sometimes turning his flanks to the wind, Larkspur declared that this night ride was

but little to his liking. Kennedy steered him with gentle taps of his hands and coaxing words.

At length the horse shied and wheeled sharply to the right.

"Whoa! What's wrong?" called Kennedy, as he dismounted. He noticed that the horse was trembling. Laddie appeared wildly excited. Kennedy turned on his flashlight to make an inspection of the ground. A moment later he discovered that they had come to the edge of Black Gulch.

It was a hundred feet sheer down to the bottom of that hideous death-trap.

"Good God!" he cried, "if Davie's down there, he's a dead man!"

"Davie!" he called, again and again. "Davie! Davie!" though he knew no answer could be returned.

There was but one way by which a man might clamber down into the gulch, and that was a perilous path, even in daylight. It was a steep and narrow cutting in the opposite side of the pit. Kennedy made his way around to the place from which the descent might be made, only to find the cutting was a streak of ice.

"Well, here's for it!" he said, as he stooped down to make sure that his riding-spurs were firmly in place. Then he lay flat on his back with his arms stretched out and his hands pressed hard on the ground, while he dug his spurs well into the ice. Inch by inch he descended, his hands and

spurs acting as brakes to prevent his shooting down to destruction. It was a long, nerve-testing, muscle-straining process, but superb physical strength backed by an indomitable will finally accomplished the feat.

During this ordeal Laddie stood at the edge of the gulch howling in terror; but Kennedy had given him orders to stay there, and there he stayed.

Having reached the bottom of the gulch, Kennedy turned on his flashlight again and a moment later he found what was left of Davie Evans. He was lying on his face with his legs crumpled under him. There was scarcely an unbroken bone in his body. Kennedy knew that death must have been instantaneous.

He turned the poor crushed body over and held the flashlight to Davie's face. It was almost unrecognizable. For a few moments he knelt beside the body of his friend and then set himself for the upward climb. The work of removing Davie's body must be left for daylight. It would call for men and ropes. Meanwhile he must get away and announce his sad news.

Kennedy climbed out of the gulch by the same means as he descended. He went up on his back, using hands and spurs for leverage. The ascent was a greater strain than the descent had been, especially as he neared the top, but his nerve did not fail him nor did his muscles decline their duty. Soaked in sweat, aching in every part of him and

well-nigh exhausted, he reached, at length, the level ground.

Davie's death cast a gloom over the ranch, for he had been every man's friend and every man there loved him.

When Ferguson first learned that the body of his ward was lying at the bottom of Black Gulch he broke down completely.

"It's no' a fair deal the Almighty has been givin' him. He's cut the puir laddie off in his sins. I didna' think it of the Almighty, wi' Davie strivin' so hard to overcome and hopin' for the time when he might be singin' wi' the angels. He didna' die drunk, 'tis true, but there's little consolation in that. He was wantin' to get drunk and tryin' to get drunk and that was verra near as bad. It sealed his fate. Why couldna' the Almighty have waited till Davie was in a state o' grace? He was often in a state o' grace. He was there most of his time, so he was, and I winna' let no man say to the contrary. Why didna' the Almighty wait and tak' him when he was clean and sweet? My poor Davie! And I counted he was elected for salvation!"

"Listen, Ferguson!" said Gordon Kennedy. "The Almighty has done better for Davie than you had hoped. He took him straight from the peak of victory into the realms of glory. He's singing with the angels now, you may be certain. Davie was *not* running away when he met his death. *He was coming back. He had overcome!*"

XIX

THROUGH GREAT TRIBULATION

DURING the early part of his term in prison, Pearson was sunk in the depths of remorse and despair. Margaret feared for his reason.

"I wish I could die," he kept on saying. "There's nothing left for me to live for in this world. Better if my sentence had been for six years than six months. I'll be in a worse fix out of prison than I am here. I'll have no money, no employment, no character, no respect from anybody. Here I'm hidden from the world. But where can I hide my face when I leave? Why can't I die?"

Though her own future looked so dark and her heart felt like lead, Margaret did her utmost to soothe and encourage him.

"You are not to talk like that, Father," she said. "You are not to think such dreadful things. There's a lot of sympathy for you and you'll find many friends when you come out. You must want to live for my sake. I'll be needing you and you'll need me. That will make life worth living for both of us."

"But what can I do for you, my child? My hands will be tied. I'll be nothing but a drag and a disgrace. I'll always be regarded as a jail-bird, a bird with a broken pinion."

"No, no, mark my words, Father, you'll make good again."

Pearson had been well known and well liked in Vancouver as a man of upright life and kindly bearing. It was widely known that no one had suffered financial loss, through him, apart from the members of his own family. The fact that Gordon Kennedy had felt impelled to resign his pastorate in Toronto and retire to an Alberta ranch in consequence of the affair, tended to increase public sympathy. It was recognized that he was paying a heavy penalty for Pearson's lapse. Opinions were divided regarding the stand which Margaret had taken. The subject was much discussed in social circles. It was felt that the situation involved a delicate and difficult question of honour. When it became known that she had repudiated her marriage vows almost before the echo of them had died away, strenuously resisting her husband's appeals, the majority of her own sex voted her in the wrong.

"She's a proud fool," they declared. "She should have left herself entirely in her husband's hands and have done exactly what he wished her to do. She brought trouble enough upon him by wrecking his career in the ministry, without driving him into the wilderness alone. Her father merely

misappropriated money. She is robbing a splendid man of something far more precious than money. The fact is, she didn't love him. She married him for social position. She must be hard as nails."

Others took a different view of the matter, praising her for the sacrifice she was making and for her loyalty in standing by her father.

So much did the question of a wife's duty under such circumstances become the problem of the hour that a session of the Ministerial Association of the city was devoted to a discussion of it. The ministers, with but two dissenting voices, decided that she should have gone with Kennedy to the ranch. The whole discussion, however, worked out in Pearson's favour. The more his daughter was blamed, the more was sympathy aroused for him.

One of the men who felt most keenly for Pearson was Henry Boynton, Manager of the Bank through which the Pacific Timber Milling Company transacted business. He was not backward in telling Myers what he thought of him for his association with the unfortunate affair.

"You're much to blame," he said sternly, "nearly as much as Pearson is. I told you long ago that all cheques of the company should be countersigned by the two of you—in each other's presence."

"Yes, I know. But it wasn't practicable. I

often had to be away for weeks at a time. Besides, I trusted him absolutely."

"Pshaw! But not more than he trusted the stockbrokers. I'm not whitewashing Pearson, mind you. He lost his head. But why didn't you take measures to save the situation the moment you discovered what he'd done? You didn't even speak to me about it. Why didn't you demand that he should put up security at once? That would have pulled him up with a round turn. You muddled that matter, Myers—muddled it badly."

"I suppose I did. I'm most unhappy about it."

"You may well be. It isn't doing you any good in the city, I can tell you. It isn't doing your business any good. Now, I've a suggestion to make, if I may be permitted."

"Sure! I'll be glad to have it."

"Well, the suggestion is this: that you appoint another treasurer; then go to Pearson and tell him you'll take him back as secretary to the company when he's released. He would serve you well in that capacity."

"I'm willing to do it if the Board agrees," replied Myers.

"They'll agree, all right, if they have enough sense to come in out of the rain. They probably know that it's raining a bit already, with the glass still going down. It will mean something in the way of goodwill for your business if you take Pearson back. Please understand—you have as much

to gain by this as he has. It will help him if you take him back and it will help you, too. He can get a good job, all right, when he comes out. I know men who will be wanting him, but I'd like you to step in front of them with your own proposal."

When he learned that his tender had been accepted, Silcox went immediately to Pearson with his news.

"I've got the contract for building that new railway in Alberta," he said. "It will run right through the Kennedy ranch. It's one of the biggest things I've tackled. I'm going to clear a hundred thousand on it, at least. Probably more. I've got a good job for you in connection with it."

Pearson was all excitement on the instant.

"That sounds almost too good to be true," he answere.d "But, Fred, if you can give me some sort of employment, any sort at all, it will be my salvation."

"You can do the work I have in mind, all right. It isn't an easy job, but you can handle it. I want you to act as paymaster. I shall employ about six hundred men. Their wages will run to a large sum each week and there'll be other big bills to pay. You're just the man to handle that end of the businenss. Money will be in the Bank at Mandeville subject to your orders."

Pearson stared at Silcox for a moment in blank amazement. Then his face went deathly pale and he began to tremble.

"Fred, can you possibly mean that? Do you realize what you are doing?"

"Certainly."

"You propose to trust me with the handling of all that money?"

"Yes."

Pearson covered his face with his hands. Tears trickled out between his fingers.

"That's all right, Arthur," said Silcox cheerily. "Just pull yourself together now and get into line for work. I shall need to consult you often from now on. It will be a busy winter for the both of us. We shall have to prepare big estimates and order materials and get the plant on the ground in order to begin operations at the beginning of April. It will involve a lot of correspondence. You can do a good deal of that work for me right here. Your salary will begin at once. I should think it will work out a little better than what you were getting at the Milling Company."

Pearson got up and paced the room. When he could control his feelings sufficiently to speak, he said: "Fred, you've given me back my life."

Following this came a visit from Myers to offer him the secretaryship of the Milling Company. Pearson was deeply grateful, yet proud to tell of the arrangement already made with Silcox. From that

time on, Pearson steadily improved in health and spirits.

As time went by, Margaret's sufferings grew more and more acute. Throughout the autumn months she bore a double burden of distress—distress for her father and for her husband. Although she was, at first, unconscious of it, these burdens balanced each other to some extent. She became aware of it, however, as anxiety for her father lightened. Then the other load grew heavier and threatened to break her. She was proving the truth of the paradox that it is easier to bear two troubles than one. The movement of her mind from the one grief to the other had, of itself, done something to prevent a nervous breakdown. But now, as the burden grew one-sided—as her mind continuously bowed in one direction, as she brooded over the havoc wrought in Gordon's life—she was brought to the verge of collapse.

The Silcoxes were deeply concerned for her health. She took but little food. She suffered from lack of sleep. Formerly accustomed to vigorous exercise in the open air, persistence in seclusion sadly sapped her vitality. She grew pale and weak. The firm oval vanished from her face. Hollows and dark shadows appeared under her eyes.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Silcox. "She's the real prisoner, not Arthur. If she would only get out more! If she would consent to meet people!

But she shuts herself away from everybody. She has gone nowhere during all these months except to that prison. That, itself, is enough to drive her mad. I tell you, she's a sick woman. Something must be done, and done quickly, or she'll be a wreck. If she goes down at this rate, much longer, she'll become a permanent invalid."

"There's a good, free, healthy life waiting for her on the ranch," replied Silcox. "It beats me why she doesn't go. She must know that Gordon is eating his heart out with longing for her to join him. Min, do you think the girl is insane? It looks that way to me sometimes."

"Well, I'm not a brain specialist," answered his wife, "but I've observed no symptoms of what I would term insanity. She's terribly unhappy, constantly depressed and extremely nervous. I guess that's bad enough."

"Yes, and that way madness lies. She must be taken out of herself by hook or by crook. Can't you think of anything?"

"I don't know that we can do anything at all, Fred. She's evidently trying to hold on until the time comes for her to hear from Gordon. The six-months' stay of proceedings will soon be ended."

"She should not have put that embargo on him. It was a crazy notion. Indeed, I regard it as a wicked thing for her to have done."

"Don't say that, Fred! She was crushed and

dazed. She wanted to do right and was willing to sacrifice herself. She acted according to the light she had."

"Do you think she loves him as much as she ought to?"

"Oh, Fred, that's much too bad of you! She worships him."

"Listen, Min! For months we've been urging her to call in a doctor, and she wouldn't hear of it. Now this nonsense has got to stop. I'm going to have Courtnay look her over this very day. If she gets stubborn about it, there'll be a thundering row. Tell her I want to speak with her."

As Margaret came into the room, Silcox's heart smote him. She looked so frail, so sad and yet so sweet. He spoke very gently to her.

"Margaret, dear," he said, "I'm asking Doctor Courtnay to see you today. I hope you'll consent."

"Yes, Uncle Fred, I will. I think I need a tonic. Nothing more than that. I . . . I shall have to take up some big responsibilities presently, and I want to be strong."

Silcox eyed her critically.

"What particular responsibilities do you expect to assume?" he asked.

"The responsibilities of being wife to a man whose career I have ruined. Gordon will want me to join him. I know he will. It will be my duty to consent."

"Sure! And your supreme happiness and joy, I should say."

"Uncle Fred, it will be heaven on earth if . . . if he can be contented and happy. Do you think that is at all possible?"

"Certainly, I do. He's a big man living in a big world with big opportunities opening up to him. He's destined to be one of the greatest forces in this West country. He isn't pitying himself for having to give up the ministry. He's shaping up splendidly to his new environment. All he needs now is—*you.*"

The colour surged into her face and then retreated, leaving her pale as death. Her breath came in little gasps.

"If I can believe that, I shan't need any other tonic."

"Of course you can believe it, and you must. To doubt it would be an insult to him. But it is for Courtnay to decide about that tonic. You've let yourself run a long way downhill in health."

The doctor took a serious view of Margaret's condition. Medicines would do her but little good. She must have a change of surroundings and a change of air. The best thing was an ocean voyage. Why not go to England for a three- or six-months' visit?

Margaret then laid her whole case before him. She would be having a letter from her husband in a day or two and he would be wanting her to begin

married life with him on the ranch. Would not that be a sufficient change?

The doctor vetoed the suggestion. No. In her present condition such a move would be perilous from every viewpoint.

"Get your health up first! Mr. Kennedy will agree with me in that. I'll write to him if you say the word."

"No, no! Please don't! We'll work it out by ourselves."

"About the ocean voyage," continued the doctor. "I don't like the idea of having you go alone. If you could find a congenial companion it would be all right."

Mrs. Silcox spoke with the doctor as he was about to leave the house. Hearing his proposals regarding the ocean trip, she said, "I'll go with her. I should love to. It will be quite convenient. Mr. Silcox will be away from home. It's ten years since my last visit to the other side. It will be a perfect joy to spend another springtime in dear old England."

XX

LIGHT ON THE CLOUD

IT was only by exercising the full strength of his will that Gordon was able to refrain from writing to Margaret during those six anxious months. He wrote no letters to any of his old friends and yielded to his disinclination to answer the few letters he received. His thoughts turned in upon himself, searching the deeps of his being. He found things there which put him to shame. He discovered that he had been over-fond of popularity and unduly sensitive to public opinion. While he believed that he had loved his fellowmen he was now led to think that he had been still more in love with their love of him. He felt it to be a stain upon his past life—a stain that should be removed.

He did not permit time to hang heavily on his hands. He worked hard on the ranch and experienced a growing liking for it. But it was in his religious work among the settlers that he found his chief satisfaction. More and more the spiritual destitution of the region appealed to his imagination and his sympathies. The possibilities involved in the type of work he was doing began to open out. He laid plans for realizing them.

Kennedy was no lover of money. He valued it only in so far as it could be translated into life. He reckoned that with what he could well spare from his present and prospective income, along with what the farmers and ranchmen in the district would give, he could provide for the support of two whole-time missionaries on the field and four student pastors during the summer months.

It was his intention to secure men who would work along undenominational lines. When the time should arrive for organizing churches, they were to be bound by no hard and narrow creeds. He desired to set up churches in which a man like Jim Kennedy could become a member. Jim believed that the whole of religion was contained in the word "friendship"—friendship toward God and man.

Six months from the day of his parting from Margaret he wrote her a long, passionate letter, assuring her of his undiminished love. He declared that were he now the unmarried minister of Memorial Church, with his present knowledge of her, he would seek her out at once and try to win her for his wife. Nothing would turn him aside. He wrote that he had been ceaselessly longing, grieving and praying for her since their separation. He begged her to join him without further delay. He told her of his new work and the joy he was finding in it. He needed but her presence to complete his contentment.

The letter included a vivid picture of ranch life with its broad landscapes and far horizons, its growing herds of cattle, and the clever horsemanship of the cowboys. He told her what rugged, big-hearted fellows they were and of the reverence they would pay to a good woman. He did not forget to mention Laddie. Laddie would be wild with joy at sight of her. He had trained the dog to talk about her.

"When I ask, 'Where's Margaret?' he goes to the window, looks away towards the West and makes a most mournful sound. When I ask, 'Where should Margaret be?' he rushes up and puts his arms around me. When I ask what we shall do if Margaret doesn't come, he falls over on his back, completely knocked out."

The tears rained down Margaret's face as she read the letter. So intense was her joy that at times it felt like pain. It was ecstasy to the verge of agony. But it was life to her soul, life that surged through her whole being and thrilled her as the mounting sap of spring thrills the leafless tree that has been standing dormant through the long, cold winter. She sank to her knees sobbing and praying.

Mrs. Silcox, who knew the letter had arrived, tapped at the door.

"May I come in, Margaret?"

After a few moments the door opened and Margaret threw herself into the arms of her

friend. Mrs. Silcox was trembling with apprehension.

"Tell me about it, quick! Surely you have had no bad news?"

Margaret was unable to speak. She uttered a faint moan and lapsed into unconsciousness.

Mrs. Silcox laid her on the bed and bathed her forehead and face in eau de cologne. After a few minutes she revived. She looked up at her aunt and tried to speak. Her face quivered and she burst into tears.

"Margaret, dearest, tell me! Was there anything unkind in the letter? Anything to hurt you?"

Margaret shook her head. Presently she was able to say, in a broken voice, "The joy is too great! It's almost killing me!"

"No, no, my dear, joy doesn't kill. So, everything is all right?"

Margaret smiled and a light broke over her face like the rose of dawn.

"It's a beautiful world, Auntie, and God is very, very wonderful," she whispered.

Kennedy had written that at a word from Margaret he would come at once to Vancouver. Her first impulse was to telegraph him to come. The Silcoxes, however, felt that the emotional strain of a meeting would be too much for her in her present weakened condition. The doctor strongly supported their view

and Margaret submitted to be guided by their advice.

She wrote Kennedy a letter that made his pulses leap and tingle. In that letter she turned the cup of her heart upside down and poured the rich, warm wine of her love into his thirsty life.

Would he forgive her if, in the confusion of her mind, she had failed to discern the right path? Nay, she knew he had forgiven her if, indeed, he had ever felt resentment. She would come to him at once but for the fact that, at present, she was unfit to assume the duties of a wife.

"I'm a poor creature at the moment—only half a woman. I want to come to you in health and strength."

She told him of the doctor's wish that she should take the ocean voyage. Instead of having him come to Vancouver, she suggested that she should stop off at Calgary and spend a day with him there. They would be getting away in a few weeks.

By the same post came a letter from Dr. Courtnay which did much to relieve Kennedy's anxiety regarding Margaret's health. It assured him that the whole trouble was due to nerve exhaustion. The tonic of the sea trip with a period of quiet rest in her old English home would fully re-establish her strength.

On the tenth of April Kennedy was in Calgary to meet the eastbound train at eleven-thirty in the morning.

Mrs. Silcox was on the platform of the Pullman, waving to them as the train steamed into the station. Gordon caught sight of Margaret's face at the window.

In an instant he was beside her. He was distressed by the change in her appearance. The excitement of the moment sent the colour flaming into her cheeks and made her eyes abnormally bright; but the immediately ensuing pallor and the pinched look of her face told their story all too plainly. He noticed a pathetic twitching of the lips and some trembling of the hands.

They drove to the Royal Hotel, where Gordon had engaged a private sitting-room for Margaret in which she might rest undisturbed.

"Now, do you think you are strong enough for the journey, dear?" he asked. "I don't want you to take any risks."

"There's no risk at all, I'm much stronger than I was six weeks ago," she replied. "I shall be quite well by the time I get across the Atlantic. The doctor says I've just reached the point where the voyage will do me the greatest good."

"I hope that's true. It's a big pond, and I don't much relish the thought of our being on different sides of it. But if it restores your health, I'll forgive its bigness."

He then proceeded to give her the full story of his winter's work. She listened eagerly and with growing excitement. She could picture it all—the

long drives across the prairie; the crowded school-houses; the eager and strained looks on the faces of the hearers; Davie Evans in his ecstasy of song, and Gordon's glowing face as he lifted his rich, strong voice to tell of things that make for life and peace.

With deep emotion he told her of the passing of Davie.

"He gave me help where I most needed it," he said. "He broke the ice. But his work isn't finished, by a long way. I've never seen people so deeply moved as the school-house congregations have been by the story of Davie's death. He's still breaking the ice in their hearts, not only breaking, but melting it."

He went on to tell her of the work on the railroad and of all the new life and business it had created. He told her how well her father was looking and of the respect in which he was held.

"And here's a big new chance for me," he went on. "I'm conducting occasional afternoon services for the men in the open air. Practically all of them attend and they make an impressive and appealing congregation. It's no small undertaking to speak to the general level of their intelligence and yet say things that are worth while. Jim was down last Sunday and he says he reckons I'm learning to preach now. What do you think of that?"

"It means that you are developing new elements of power, doesn't it?"

His face flushed with pleasure.

"I feel that way about it myself," he said confidently yet modestly. "I'm conscious of getting a new grip of myself and a new hold on reality. I often feel that if I could go back into the pulpit again I would lay things on the hearts and minds of the people as I never did before."

The colour that was now coming and going in her face betrayed Margaret's agitation.

"Do you find yourself yearning for the pulpit again?" she asked wistfully.

"I don't let it trouble me much. Sometimes, in my mind, I'm addressing a great invisible congregation and then the yearning comes upon me pretty strongly. But I don't encourage those thoughts or moods. I'm thankful for the work I have. It's well worth while. It's a man's job. It gets right down to the foundations required for the upbuilding of a sound nation."

Her hand trembled in his as she said: "This is the best news you could possibly give me. It puts an end to my troubling. It was terrible to think you might never find contentment again, and still more appalling to think you might possibly settle into a contentment that would be unworthy of you.

What peace of mind could there be for me if you had not been able to preach again? On the other hand, if you should not want to preach—it would break my heart."

"And do you feel quite certain, Margaret, that

you can settle down happily on an Alberta ranch after another taste of English life?" he asked.

"I shall love it. I shall infinitely prefer it to city life."

"I have an inspiration," said Gordon, excitedly. "When you come back, I'll meet you where the ship first stops at old Quebec. It's one of the beauty spots of the world. We'll begin our long-deferred honeymoon there on the banks of the St. Lawrence. I'll write in good time and engage rooms at the Hotel Frontenac."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Doesn't the idea appeal to you?" he asked.

"Yes, dearest. It's the idea of the grandest husband and lover in the world! You are sending me on my journey with all the happiness my heart can hold." After a moment's pause she added, "If you say the word, I'll abandon the trip this instant, and go to the ranch with you."

"No, Margaret, that would be asking too much of you. You must make the trip for the sake of your health."

She laughed gaily.

"On the contrary, it wouldn't be asking enough, or half enough. But perhaps I had better go on now—for everybody's sake.

Mrs. Silcox and Margaret sailed from New York on the *Pittsburgh*. The first part of the voyage was cold and rough, with strong head winds and heavy seas. Mrs. Silcox was unable to leave her

stateroom. But Margaret was in her element. She loved all mighty and moving things. She was fascinated by the movements of the ship and the rush and roar of the smashing waves. At first it wearied her to walk the length of the vessel facing the wind, but soon she could do it with ease and presently the exercise became a luxury. She spent many hours pacing the deck, breathing deeply of the strong air and watching the waves as they rose and curled and crashed upon the ocean floor.

The improvement in her health was phenomenal. Her appetite grew until she found herself impatient for meal gongs to sound. She got long nights of sound, refreshing sleep. She put on weight.

From Southampton she cabled Kennedy: "Delightful crossing. Perfectly well. Gloriously happy."

XXI

A FLATTERING OFFER

THE Honourable Herbert Poulton, the new Premier of Alberta, held a high opinion of Jim Kennedy. When forming his cabinet, Poulton had urged him to join the Government as Minister of Agriculture, offering to provide him with a safe seat in the Legislature. Though unable to persuade his friend to enter the political field, he continued to consult him on many matters of importance. Usually the conferences between these two took place in town, but one morning Jim had a letter saying:

"I'm coming down to the ranch to spend a night with you. If you don't object, I'll bring Whitehead, of the Public Works Department. He wants to consult Silcox and get some points from him. I have something of a very confidential nature to talk over with you, and I want to see how they are getting on with the new railway."

"Wonder what he's got up his sleeve, now," remarked Jim, as he handed the letter to Gordon. "You'll like Poulton. He's keen and he's straight. Plenty of human nature in him, too. Knows what he wants and goes for it. A real

leader. We'll have Silcox in for dinner. You'll enjoy the talk."

There was nothing in "Bert" Poulton's appearance to suggest a statesman. Standing between Gordon and Jim, with his head scarcely reaching to the shoulder of the one and distinctly below the shoulder of the other, he looked unimpressive. But when he began to talk, the scene was changed. Here was a man of ideas, of purposes and of strong will. As conversation proceeded he seemed to grow in physical stature. It was as though his body was being greatened by the largeness of his mind. He spoke rapidly and incisively, emphasising his remarks with an occasional gesture of the hands, while his eyes glowed with inward fire.

"A little giant!" thought Gordon, as Jim led the Premier away for their private chat.

"Well, Bert, what sort of a bee have you got in your bonnet this time?" asked Jim, as he passed the cigars.

"Tell you presently. Must give you my news first. You're to be a junction. The Canadian National Railroad people are going to build a branch line from here to Redcalf. Another boost for you."

"Jove! Is that so?"

"Yes. They've applied for right of way. You'll be a town. Car sheds, repair shop, and so on. More gravel wanted. New markets will be opened. Land values will increase. No bad taste about it, eh?"

"Don't detect any at the moment," replied Jim.

"Great thing for the whole district," continued the Premier. It will fertilize and civilize the region. And now for my errand here. I'm looking for a man to take the post of Minister of Education. Of course, he must be an enthusiast. He must be able to put our educational needs before the country in a strong and appealing way. He must be an organizer, an inspirationist, a leader. It's the most important portfolio in the Government."

"Have you any one in view?" asked Jim.

"Yes, I want your brother."

"For heaven's sake! What led you to think of him? Who put you on his track?"

"You did. You started the ball rolling and I followed it up."

"You're talking through your hat! I did nothing of the sort. I never thought of such a thing."

"Makes no difference. You suggested it to me by certain remarks you made about him and some very important facts you stated. That sent me searching into his career. What do I find? I find that he has scholarship, vision, organizing ability, and unusual power of leadership. He's in the heyday of his strength, with his life before him. He can set the heather aflame with enthusiasm as he goes about the country. He can start this work and stay with it till it's an accomplished fact. It's a life-work for him; he'll be building well for Al-

berta and building an imperishable monument for himself."

"I say, Poulton, you take my breath away. But, look here! You're not to be prejudiced in his favour by anything I said. He's my brother and I'm pretty fond of him. I may sometimes paint with a big brush when I get talking about him."

"What you said wouldn't come within gunshot of what I have in writing from other sources. Look at these!"

Poulton put his hand in his pocket and drew out a bundle of letters.

"Listen to this sort of testimony," he said. "Here's the President of Toronto University writing: 'He seems to possess every qualification that could possibly be desired.' Here's the Premier of Ontario: 'Could not imagine a better appointment. It is very similar to the one we recently made here.' And here's Beardmore, Minister of Trade in the Federal Government: 'I was a member of his congregation for three years. He was a truly great minister of religion and he will make a truly great minister of Education—all the greater because of the religious basis to his life.' What do you think of it?"

"I'm not the least little bit surprised. I felt that he had it in him to do something pretty good in the way of National Service and I've been thinking of lines along which he might work. But, by Jove! You've jumped down well in front of me. How-

ever, I don't think I shall relish the idea of you taking him away from me entirely."

"No need for that. He can retain his interest here."

"Do you intend to put the thing up to him while you're here?" asked Jim.

"Yes; and I shall expect you to back me up. How will he take it?"

"I think it will make a strong appeal to him. He's made for public life. But don't say anything about it until after dinner!"

They lingered long over the meal. The conversation touched upon many interesting subjects. At length Poulton said: "I'm glad to learn, Mr. Kennedy, that you've been making such good use of our little school-houses. It's a pity so many of them have to be closed during the winter."

"That is so. You can get more teachers in the summer, but you could get more scholars in the winter," replied Gordon. "The situation will be greatly improved when you're able to get all the teachers you need from your own Normal School and no longer be dependent upon college students from the East. But it looks as if you must wait some time for that. You can't expect to keep the Normal School full while the common schools are in a backward state, nor improve your common schools without trained teachers. It's another case of the vicious circle. Of course, the root of the matter is lack of popular interest in education."

"That's where you're right. You've put your finger on the diseased spot in the body politic. That's where it ails."

As he said this, the Premier glanced significantly at Jim.

"It seems to me," said Gordon, "that this Western country is in danger of becoming bogged in materialism. I've been saying so to Jim. I'm glad we have an idealist for our Premier—a practical idealist."

"Well, now, I appreciate that. I really do. But if the Premier of Alberta happens to be something of an idealist, he's a man who is bound to be thought flighty and hare-brained. He'll need a lot of help from all the people who are of his way of thinking."

"I hope he'll get it," replied Gordon. "While it's a fine thing to build bridges and railways and highways for commerce, it's a still greater thing to bridge the chasms of human ignorance and build highways for the human heart and mind."

Poulton took another covert glance at Jim.

"Do you know I find this enthusiasm very refreshing," he said. "What do you think of it, Silcox?"

"I agree with it. My objective is transportation. Mr. Kennedy's, transformation. It's easy to see which is the higher aim."

"In other words," remarked the Premier, "it doesn't help the country a big lot when you make

it possible for a man to travel quickly, if he's a dud when he starts and a clod when he ends."

"That's exactly it," said Silcox.

"Well, now," put in Jim, "I reckon that Whitehead and I might find something to say about the primary necessity of giving society a firm material basis. Isn't that so, Whitehead?"

"The Premier knows my views on that point," replied Whitehead. "I claim that if you look well after business, education and religion will take care of themselves. Make a country commercially prosperous and you'll get everything you need for a strong nation."

"What do you say to that?" Poulton asked as he turned to Gordon.

"I don't think it quite agrees with the verdict of history," replied Kennedy. "Of course, I recognize the fact that you can't build a great state on slender physical resources. But, on the other hand, unless you mix the yeast of idealism with the meal of commercialism you'll have soggy dough on your hands and no bread of life for the people."

Poulton was delighted with the answer. As they rose from the table he slipped his arm through Gordon's and said: "Come into Jim's private room! I want some further talk with you."

Then he turned and beckoned to Jim.

"Hadn't you two better thrash it out by yourselves?" asked the latter.

"No; we need you."

Poulton plunged directly into his theme. He talked straight ahead for ten minutes, repeating some of the things he had said to Jim and enlarging upon them.

"I tell you, honestly, if I could do that job, I'd resign the premiership tomorrow and take it on," he declared. "It's as fine an opportunity for public service as is open to any Canadian today. It's a life work and a great one. Mr. Kennedy, I want you to take up the work."

Poulton's closing words took Gordon completely by surprise. He glanced at Jim. Jim's face was blank.

"James Kennedy, do I discern your fine Italian hand in this? What sort of a game have you been playing?" he asked.

"No game at all," answered Jim. "It's Poulton's idea entirely. Can't say that I disagree with him, however. Guess it's the right thing for you. I'd like to see you take hold of it. It'll be a brute of a job in the way of hard work, but I reckon you won't dodge it on that account. You mayn't have all the brains Poulton thinks you have, but I guess you've the required amount of nerve and vim."

"But, look here, gentlemen," said Gordon with considerable heat, "this proposition doesn't fit in with plans I've been making for my life-work. You've paid me a very great compliment, Mr. Premier. I appreciate it. Unquestionably the work you have in mind is an exceedingly important one.

I'm sympathetic with it and shall try to do my bit in helping it along. But the office you propose is not for me."

"But, surely," urged the Premier, "you can't turn down a proposition like this offhand. You'll need a little time to think about it and talk it over with Jim. Don't give me your answer now. Take a week to consider it."

"That's not at all necessary. I know what my answer must be. It must be in the negative."

Poulton appealed to Jim.

"Can't you persuade him?"

"Not I. Not when he sets his jaw like that. I heard something click just now. Guess it was the key of decision turning in the lock of his will. Come on! It's no use discussing the matter with him any further."

Gordon waited up for Jim until after Poulton had retired. Then he sat down beside him and put his arm around him.

"Have I disappointed you, old chap? Are you annoyed with me?"

"No, Boy, I'm not annoyed, nor am I really disappointed. Guess I'm almost proud of you. I always thought you had the making of a man in you and it looks to me as if the man was coming on."

XXII

THE DEFAULTER REDEEMS HIMSELF

THE building of the railway was begun early in April. Immediately the aspect of the neighbourhood changed as if by magic. The movements of six hundred men attired in variously coloured garments lent a touch of picturesqueness to the scene, while their clustered sleeping-tents gave the place the appearance of an army encampment.

It was fascinating to watch the progress made from day to day, to see the line lengthening itself out across the plain like a thing of life. It seemed to be a creature growing from its own substance—a creeping thing endowed with the power of self-extension. Steadily projecting itself on its prickly belly over the brown level stretches of prairie, slowing down to thrust its steel-shod head through the myriad ridges that billowed across its path, pausing to gather momentum ere it hurled itself across the challenging streams, to push on again and cut its way through belts of sturdy timber—it moved like a thing of fate—restless, tireless, and irresistible. It was a gigantic worm, a thing with but a single instinct—to link Tremain with Mande-

ville. For this it lived and had its being. This achieved, it would stiffen and lie rigid; yet for incalculable years to come it would transmit the pulse of life to the region it had threaded. It would cause the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The enterprise attracted many sorts of people. Land speculators flocked in by the dozen, and pedlars by the score. The line was infested by vendors of cheap jewellery, patent-medicine men, and thimble-riggers. Bootleggers came along offering bad whiskey at a dollar a flask. Judging from the eagerness with which they purchased what appeared to be black-bound copies of the Bible, one might think that Silcox had assembled the most religious set of navvies that ever carried pick and shovel; but the spirit imbibed from these sober-looking volumes soon manifested itself in ways that dispelled the notion.

At first it seemed that every type of itinerant gentry in the country regarded "the line" as a happy hunting-ground. Travelling photographers visited the place, and found ready patronage. Life-insurance agents considered it worth their while to spend evenings with the men, impressing upon them the uncertainty of life on the one hand, and the certainty of winning large profits on the other by paying premiums into their respective companies. Newspaper men occasionally appeared upon the scene to give it a vigorous "write-up." A sharp

watch was kept on all suspicious-looking characters, and soon the region gained the reputation of being undesirable for any but legitimate purposes.

For the Kennedys the work created a fine volume of new business. They found ready sale, at good prices, for all the horses they could spare. Their contract to supply the camp with beef enabled them to dispose of a considerable number of steers at profitable figures, while the output of their gravel-pits made a handsome daily addition to their balance at the bank.

One of the busiest men in connection with the undertaking was Pearson. He was dealing with more men and handling more money than he had ever done before. His position was next to that of Silcox. He was keen upon his work.

"This job seems to be rejuvenating him," said Gordon.

"Yes," replied Silcox; "it was just the medicine he needed. I never knew a man to throw himself more completely into his work. He's doing splendidly. Keeps right up with everything. No loose ends. A clean desk every night, if he has to work till midnight. But he's certainly thriving under it all. Heart and hope and prairie air have worked a miracle."

One day toward the end of June, Pearson was returning from his fortnightly visit to the Bank at Mandeville. The Kennedy automobile, which

they used for these occasions, was humming along at a good pace, when Peters, the driver, suddenly slackened pace and snarled out:

"Darn them hobos! Both rotten drunk! Paralysed!"

A little distance in front of them were two disreputable looking individuals who had evidently lost the power of progressive locomotion. One of them had fallen down in the middle of the road and was making ineffective efforts to rise. The other was staggering around him, holding out his hand, but never getting any grip of his companion. When it seemed that he was on the point of making connection, he would either pitch forward, lurch to one side, or reel backward. Not the slightest notice was taken of the automobile, which presently stopped within a few feet of them.

"Four-legged beasts would pay some attention to the horn," growled Peters, "but these brutes are too far gone. Cripes! They've been up agin' the bootleggers good and hard."

"Are they our men?" asked Pearson.

"Don't think so. I take them for regular tramps."

"Isn't there room to pass them?"

"No, worse luck! Heap of gravel on one side, tree on the other. We'll have to pitch them out of the road. The one that's down won't give any trouble. If you'll drag him away, I'll take care of the other gent."

They got out of the car and went forward. The individual who had managed to keep his feet, was now gyrating like a whirling dervish.

"Thash a kind gemman," he said, as Pearson stooped to lay hold of the prostrate pilgrim. "Give him yer hand, mate!"

Obedient to this summons, 'mate' reached out his hand and Pearson helped him to rise to his feet. He had little trouble in doing this. In fact, none at all. The man came to his feet with surprising alacrity. The next instant he shouted: "Hands up!" and Pearson found himself looking into the barrel of a revolver levelled at his head. Peters was in similar plight.

It was plain to be seen that these bandits were not to be trifled with. They were hardened and desperate characters.

Pearson and Peters were fairly caught. There was nothing for it but to obey. Pearson groaned and raised his hands.

"I'll take the barker," said the footpad, as he coolly thrust his hand into the outside pocket of Pearson's coat and removed his revolver.

"Now for the dough!"

In a trice his fingers traversed the paymaster's pockets. They contained but a few trifles, apart from his watch. That disappeared as if by magic. Then Pearson's waistcoat was torn open and an investigating hand began to feel about his body. Pearson winced.

"Ah, bad tumour that. Needs instant treatment," said the assailant.

The robber ripped open Pearson's shirt, bringing to view a broad, flat packet, bound about his body by a belt. It was an impressive-looking packet, carefully sealed and bearing the stamp of the bank. Pearson was trembling and groaning.

"Buck up, old bean!" said the bandit jocularly. "It always hurts a bit to get rid of a growth like this without taking dope, but you'll be put to sleep pretty sudden if you make a kick."

The packet was now in the highwayman's hands.

"I'll just take a peep at this to see if everything's in order. Don't be in a hurry to move."

The packet was slashed open, disclosing a number of smaller packets, all sealed and stamped: fifteen of them. Then one of these packets was cut open and the miscreant took a glance at the contents. There was no time to waste. The building of the railway had put a good deal of traffic on this road. At any moment a motor might come along, or a team of horses.

"Fivers!" he murmured. "Making how much altogether?"

"I'm supposed to be carrying twenty thousand dollars. The cheque was for that amount."

"Well, that's about what we reckoned on. Mate, have you searched that other guy?"

"Yep. Nothing here but a ticker, a pocket-knife and seventy-five cents."

The leading footpad turned to Pearson and said: "Well, old boy, me and my mate ain't above doin' a small transaction like this. It don't amount to much compared with your way of doing things. We're only amateurs at the game. When it comes to dough-snatching, you've got us skun a mile. Beat it, now, old boy!"

Peters was badly shaken. His face was blanched and his hands trembled. It seemed to take him a long while to get the car started. At length it began to move. It had gone but a few yards when they heard an oath and a shout. Then a pistol shot, and a bullet whizzed past Pearson's head.

"Hurry, Peters! Put her to it!" cried Pearson.

The car leaped forward. A few seconds more and they would be out of range. Then a bullet stung Pearson between the shoulders. The next instant his throat was full of blood. Ten minutes later, the car drew up at construction headquarters.

Pearson tried to lift the cushion on which he had been sitting and motioned to Peters to open the tool-box. From this he took out a packet containing the money he had drawn at the bank—twenty thousand dollars—and, supported by Peters, made his way into his tent and locked the money in the safe. Then he collapsed.

Silcox was soon on the spot. He sent Peters to notify the Kennedys of what had happened. In a few minutes the car returned bringing Jim, Gordon and Ferguson.

After a hurried consultation, Jim got into the car, with Ferguson beside him. Inside of an hour they were back, accompanied by the doctor from Mandeville.

Pearson had been bleeding constantly and profusely. He was shot through the lungs. He had only spoken three words, and these were—"It's all right."

When the doctor had made his examination, Silcox asked: "Can he recover?"

The doctor shook his head.

"Will he last long?"

"No. He's dying now. He hasn't more than half-an-hour to live. His heart won't hold out any longer than that. We must try to keep him from choking to death. That's all we can do."

Pearson lived just twenty minutes after the doctor's arrival. Shortly before the end he had a choking spell. Silcox was holding his head as he coughed the clotted blood out of his throat. In the moment of ease that followed, Silcox said in a breaking voice: "Dear old boy! It's hard to part with you. How can I do without you?"

"It's all right, Fred. Quite all right," gasped the dying man. Then his head drooped. Arthur Pearson had slipped away.

In getting the full story from Peters, Silcox asked, "Did Mr. Pearson always carry that dummy packet next his skin?"

"I guess so," answered Peters. "I thought it was the money myself, for sure, by the way he groaned and carried on when that blighter took it."

When they came to make arrangements for the burial, Silcox said: "I think he would like to be buried here on this ranch and near to the Line. He put his heart into this work and he gave his life for it."

XXIII

A TASTE OF THE OLD LIFE

WHEN Al Hobart learned from Jim Kennedy that Gordon was coming east to meet his wife at Quebec on the twenty-seventh of July, a bright idea occurred to him. At least, *he* considered it a bright idea. He suggested to the official board of the Metropolitan Church that Kennedy should be invited to preach there on the fifteenth and twenty-second of the month. The suggestion was warmly received and Hobart was commissioned to take the matter in hand. He wrote an urgent letter, assuring Gordon that this was no perfunctory invitation. There was keen interest behind it.

"You must say 'Yes,'" the letter ran, "and, of course, you'll be my guest. I'll take you for a fishing trip during the week and we'll get some good sport. I know just where the speckled beauties are waiting for us to drop them a line."

Gordon showed the letter to Jim. Jim read it and handed it back without comment.

"Well, what about it?" asked Gordon. "Do you think I should accept the invitation?"

"Guess you'll have to, for Hobart's sake. But

I'd have been just as well pleased if he hadn't sent that letter. I don't want to see you unsettled again. I know what will happen. Once you get into that pulpit you'll go wild with longing for the old life. Then you'll have your old battle to fight all over again."

"There was some talk last year about asking me to become the minister of that church," Gordon said after a moment's silence. "Hobart mentioned it to me when he was here."

"The dickens he did! You didn't say anything about it to me; nor did Hobart."

"That is so. For, seeing that I declined the offer, we thought it better to keep the matter to ourselves."

"So it went as far as that?"

"Yes. It gave me one sleepless night. Metropolitan is a powerful organization, and Hobart pressed me pretty hard. That was shortly before my wedding. It was lucky I didn't consent. It would have brought embarrassment upon two churches instead of one. But I don't see that it could do any harm if I should preach to them for a couple of Sundays, now. There would be nothing more to it than that."

"In other words, you intend to accept the invitation?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're asking for trouble and you'll get it."

"Perhaps. But there's something I want to find out, and I can't find it out in any other way than by saying 'Yes' to Hobart's letter. I want to know just how I stand with reference to this prairie life, Jim, and just how I stand with myself. Even now, I'm not as certain about these things as I'd like to be. After Montreal—I shall know."

"My boy, you're playing with fire. And I'm not only thinking of your own peace of mind, I'm thinking of Margaret's happiness. You seemed to have put that on a solid basis before she went to England. If you don't look out, you'll upset everything."

"I hope not, but I must try this matter out for her sake no less than for my own."

Jim looked at him in a mournful way. "Well, if that's the situation, go to it. You'll do just as you think fit about it, I've no doubt," he said resignedly.

When Gordon Kennedy faced the congregation of the Metropolitan Church on the first Sunday of his engagement there, he was conscious of a certain nervousness. It soon passed away, however, and presently he felt as free and joyous as a bird singing on a bough.

It was an impressive congregation. There were hundreds of men, of all ages; keen-looking business men, bankers, doctors, lawyers, university professors, students, clerks, artisans, and a host of young people of both sexes. As he went on with

his discourse, it seemed to him that he had met this congregation before. At length he realized that he had seen it in his dreams.

That evening after dinner Hobart said: "Well, you've had a great day, and so have our people. You made a wonderful impression. It must be a fine sensation to be conscious of swaying such a congregation as you have had today."

"Yes, that is so," replied Gordon. Then suddenly changing the trend of conversation, he remarked: "You're well up on the mountain, here. It's a magnificent view; the lighted city and the dark curving line of the river yonder."

"I love it, Gordon," said Hobart. "I love rivers. I was born beside one. I shouldn't like to live in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

"Meaning Alberta?"

"Mebbe so."

"But we have rivers there. We have our own Moon River, you know, right on the ranch."

"Nothing more than a glorified creek, my boy."

"Jim would be in your wool, if he heard you say that."

Hobart laughed.

"Jim sees everything out West through magnifying glasses, rose-tinted glasses. I'm glad he does. It makes for good citizenship. But, do you realize that we have here in this city of Montreal more than twice as many people as they have in the whole Province of Alberta?"

"Yes, I know it. But we have the prairies."

"People are more than prairies, Gordon."

"True. But the prairies will attract the people. We have a good many people there now, and lots more to come."

"Not quite your sort, are they?"

"No; but what of that?"

"Well, I was just wondering if you could stick it out there, and . . . and be happy."

"Hobart, these people interest me and appeal to me. I've been trying to do them some little good."

"I know. Most praiseworthy on your part, but they haven't the capacity to receive a tenth part of what you're able to give. I'm an economist. It seems to me that in your case there's a lot of power running to waste. Now, here at the Metropolitan, for instance, every ounce of your power would tell. Your culture, your eloquence, your ideals, your personality would all count for big achievement. I think it a pity that so fine a flower of our Eastern culture should waste itself on desert air."

Gordon's face flushed.

"Please don't! When you talk that way, you make me hang my head in shame."

"How so?"

"Because I am reminded that—

"The flower that Bethlehem saw bloom
Out of a heart all full of grace,
Gave never forth its full perfume,
Until the Cross became its vase."

Again a silence fell between them. Hobart lit a cigar.

"I hope you're not growing morbid, Gordon," he said after a few moments' musing. "But you're tired, and we won't pursue this subject further at the moment. We'll go to bed and get a good night's sleep, to be fresh for an early start in the morning. We're going to have great fishing weather, and they say the Saguenay is alive with trout."

They motored to Quebec City and down the north bank of the St. Lawrence to their destination. Kennedy was enthusiastic over the beauty of the far-famed scenery. The old-world air of the communities through which they passed, the Catholic churches and wayside crucifixes everywhere in evidence gave him a feeling of having been suddenly ushered into a foreign land. His mind was constantly pricked into acute sensibility.

"It's a wonderful old Province, Hobart, romantic, dreamy, only half awake. Seems to be gazing into the past instead of facing the future. Perhaps it would be a pity to disturb it."

"We propose to develop it without unduly disturbing it," replied Hobart. "Let me tell you this: Quebec is the most charming province in this Dominion. It has lovelier scenery, more interesting history, thriftier people, richer resources and a greater future than any other part of Canada, bar

none. What cities in all this broad land can compare for situation with Montreal and Quebec? Where else can you find such crystal rivers, turquoise lakes, silvery cascades, amethyst hills and sapphire skies? These things spell not only beauty but utility and wealth. We have the most wonderful water power here that can be found on this continent, if not on the globe. Niagara is but a baby compared with the Chaudiere. We have millions of horsepower on the north bank of this river waiting to be harnessed. Then, think of the forests which lie back of it all, and the hills rich in coal, iron, copper and gold. Our agricultural and orchard lands are second to none. Believe me, Gordon, we're destined to become one of the wealthiest and most influential countries in the world."

Kennedy put his hand on Hobart's knee as he said, "Money doesn't always form an equation with influence, old chap. California is richer than Italy; New York is richer than Paris; Chicago is richer than Geneva; but . . ."

"Wait a minute! We're going to be great in art and literature. The foundations for it are already laid. This is the home of genius. Our painters mix their colours with soul and brains. They have originality, insight, feeling for beauty as well as technique. We have the real Canadian poets, too; the sons of sweetest song. They touch deeper and higher notes than any of their contemporaries.

Remember, it was here that Canada came to birth. Here were 'the seats of the mighty.' Here two great old-world civilizations met in their splendid flowering time and mingled their pollen. Digest that fact, my boy, and you'll have the key to the situation as it exists in this grand old Province. I wish you could see your way clear to join us here and plant your life amongst us."

"Well," replied Gordon, "I'm trying to take an intelligently selective attitude towards the soil. I want to plant my life where it will count for the most."

"I hope you won't feel it necessary to take a sacrificial attitude toward the seed," Hobart rejoined. "Don't sink yourself out of sight and rot in some dark furrow!"

"But isn't that the law of the harvest? Isn't that what you must do with your grain of wheat if you want an increase? There are different things you may do with it—eat it, sell it, hoard it—but if you are to perpetuate and increase it you must bury it. Look there!" Gordon pointed to a field of billowing wheat.

"Yes, I know," replied Hobart. "But, speaking of attitudes, the men who sowed those fields took an intelligent attitude toward the *season*. They chose not only where but when to plant. Gordon, it isn't the right time for a man like you to plant himself down in Alberta. The ground is too hard and dry as yet and the spiritual atmosphere is too

frosty. They're all materialists out there, rank materialists."

"Not Jim—nor Poulton. Both of them are men of high moral purpose. But I'll join issue with your whole view of the case. An intelligent attitude toward the season means a *resolute* attitude. When Jim and I were boys on the home farm we once planted potatoes in a snowstorm. Got a good crop, too. We went by the calendar, not the barometer. The farmer who permits himself to be bullied by the barometer is a fool. I think we may sum it up in this way. When one has a life to sow, let him take a selective attitude toward the soil, a sacrificial attitude toward the seed, a resolute attitude toward the season and a trustful attitude toward the skies."

Hobart looked at his companion steadily for a while.

"I'm more and more convinced," he then said, "that your proper place is in Montreal. That's just the sort of stuff we should be hearing every Sunday in Metropolitan Church."

"So you'd make me an horrible instance of 'do as I say, not as I do,' would you? But why do you keep harping upon Metropolitan Church? My chance to get in there passed by nearly a year ago. 'The mill can never grind with the water that has passed.' A lot of water has run under the bridge since you came to see me on the ranch, and it has run swift and far."

"But the river hasn't gone dry. It is in high

freshet and the sluices are full. Gordon, you're no fool. You must know what Metropolitan wants. They're keener for you than ever. You hold that church in the hollow of your hand."

"Do they know about my domestic affairs?"

"Yes, certainly. They know every last thing that can be known about Pearson, your wife and yourself. They will welcome your wife to a place of honour and affection. The men at Metropolitan do nothing blindfolded. They've had a line on you ever since you left Toronto. They know what Vancouver and Calgary and Edmonton think of you. They know that Poulton offered you a cabinet position as Minister of Education. They've got you sized up to a pennyweight."

Kennedy lowered his head between his hands. For a long time he sat silent.

"You can well understand that what happened must always remain a painful memory for my wife," he said, at length, in a low voice. "It nearly crushed the life out of her. She is only now recovering her health. She is exceedingly sensitive. A brutal word about her father's affair would torture her and paralyse her energies. I must not subject her to unnecessary suffering. She is more to me than all the churches on earth."

"No such word as you refer to will ever be spoken," Hobart hastened to reply. "Everyone will have the deepest sympathy for her."

"You cannot guarantee immunity from the lash

of cruel and wicked tongues, Hobart. There are female fiends with the poison of asps under their lips who lie in wait to do mischief. Besides, don't you see that to one in her position the very consciousness of eliciting sympathy would be painful?"

"My boy," said Hobart, "you think too little of yourself, far too little. Your wife will come to you in a perfectly normal condition of mind. There'll be nothing morbid about her. Anything that may rise up out of the past to wound her will be but as the small dust in the balance compared with her joy in you and in your great work."

XXIV

A FISHING TRIP

HOBART and Kennedy had three days of splendid fishing on the Saguenay. On the second evening their tent was pitched upon the bank of the river where they could hear the distant murmur of a waterfall. Far down below them the foam-flecked stream glistened in the moonlight as it swept swiftly on its course between steep granite walls. Joe Glode, their Indian guide, was getting things in shape for the night. Joe was a Nova Scotia Micmac who had conducted Hobart on many a fishing trip in his native province and whom the latter now kept on tap in Montreal. A warm friendship existed between these two, dating from the day when Hobart gave the Indian lad his cast-off silver watch.

Joe had been overseas during the war, serving as a sniper with the Canadian troops in France. He had been wounded and spent a long time in hospital. He still walked a little lame.

Kennedy was greatly interested in their guide. He admired his skill as woodsman and fisherman and was charmed by his quaint soft-voiced speech. While Hobart was looking through his book of

trout-flies, making selections for the following day, Kennedy talked with Joe, or rather, encouraged Joe to talk.

"How did you get on in France?" he asked. "Did you like the soldiering?"

"No. France no good. Couldn't git no chewin' tobaccer. Couldn't git none nohow. Gee! Nearly died. Lost twenty pounds. Plenty smokin' tobaccer but too light. When you git chewin' it's good for smokin', but smokin' ain't no good for chewin'."

Joe's tongue rolled a heavy mass of something under his right cheek.

"How do you like this part of the country, Montreal, Quebec, and around here?" queried Kennedy.

Joe glanced toward Hobart and lowered his voice.

"No good," he said. "All parley voo, pea soup and fried pig. Trout ain't nothin' to what they be in Nova Scotia, nuther."

"How's that? Don't they run as big?"

"Yas, plenty big and plenty many, but not same flavour. They don't know as much, nuther. Don't know scursely nothin'. Stupid, I call 'em."

"Well, now, I didn't know that trout were supposed to have brains and sense," said Kennedy.

"Depends on where you find 'em. Nova Scotia trout know a lot. And you can teach 'em anything. You can make pets of 'em. They understand everything you say. Foller you round like a dog."

"Hold on, Joe! Hold on! You're getting me out of my depth."

"True as I'm tellin' you, Mr. Kennedy. I had a tame trout once that I wouldn't take a hundred dollars for. I was offered that for her and wouldn't sell her. Name was Fanny. Most affectionate fish ever spawned. Trained her to walk and she'd foller me anywhere. Nobody nor nothin' couldn't coax her away from me. Lively pal she was, too; jest as frisky in winter as in summer. Made a little fur coat for her to wear in cold weather. Cutest lookin' thing you ever seen. Fanny got ruther stout in flesh as she grew older and lost her nice shape. Same way with Katie."

"Who is Katie, your wife?"

"No, I ain't got no wife. Don't want one, nuther. Katie's my old mother. She's eighty-eight. We live together, me and Katie, when I'm home. Got nice little place. Katie pretty well fixed. She got money in the bank—how much, I dunno. Katie still make the basket. She couldn't live if she didn't make basket. She make 'em since ever she be little girl. She make 'em good. Nice and pretty. Everybody want buy 'em. I got money in bank, too. All my army money and lots more. I got seventeen hundred dollars. Plenty girl want marry me 'cause I be rich man. I not marry nobody, jest live with Katie and take care of Jim's children."

"Who is Jim?"

"He's my brother. Good feller, Jim, but don't git on very well. Got married onto the wrong

woman. White girl out Ponhook way. She no good. Lazy and dirty. All for eat and talk gossip. Big like barn door. Jest one lump of fat. She worse than any squaw. But what you expect from white girl that would marry Injun? Jim hunt a little and fish a little and sometime he work in pulp-mill. But his money no good when she git hold of it. She ain't got no idea of stockin' leg. All spend, spend, spend. Me and Katie look after the children, keep 'em in clothes and make 'em go school. Jim's oldest girl is seventeen. She smart scholar. She soon be school-teacher mebbe."

"You're a good brother and a good son, Joe. I take you to be a truthful man, too."

"Never told a lie in my life. Katie always teached me to tell the truth. Jim's wife's an awful liar. You can't believe a word she says. One liar in the family's enough."

"Just so. Now perhaps you'll tell me a little more about Fanny. I'm deeply interested in her career."

Joe glanced again in the direction of his employer. That gentleman appeared to be engrossed with his fishing tackle.

"Well," resumed the Indian, "me and Fanny had heaps good time. Went fishin' together. Always high line. Nobody never could match us. Put Fanny in river and she round up all the trout for miles and miles. Great little scout. Keener nose than any hound. Full of fun, too. Enjoyed

herself heaps. You orter seen her when she located a pool of trout. You'd die a larfin' to see her come up to the canoe and wink. She had a wicked little wink, Fanny had."

Joe paused for a moment to assure himself that his narrative was making due impression upon his hearer. Then he extracted from his pocket a plug of blackstrap and bit off a piece half an inch square.

"Fanny never took much to the church," Joe went on. "Wasn't religious. Good though, good as gold. Worked hard and never went back on me. But she'd always sleep through Mass. Couldn't cure her of it. Couldn't do it nohow. Feed her candy and tickle her belly, but off she'd go. Couldn't keep her eyes open. Poor old Fanny!"

Joe sighed and turned his head away as if to hide his tears.

"You speak of her in a mournful tone," said Kennedy. "Did you lose her? Did she die?"

Joe lowered his voice.

"Can't abear to think about it, I can't. She met with a terrible accident. I ain't never told nobody before just how she come to her end. But I'll tell you if you promise to keep it secret. Don't want nobody sayin' nothin' agin' her now she's gone."

"I shall treat her memory with all due respect," said Kennedy gravely.

Joe's face betokened tender reminiscence as he said: "'Twas like this: I took her for a walk one

mornin'. 'Twas a Sunday mornin'. I remember. Fine mornin' in early June. Everything quiet. Air not move little bit. Apple orchards look fine all dressed in blossom. Everything smell sweet. Fanny was lookin' pretty good for her age. She be about forty, then. Stout, like Jim's wife, but always clean and bright. We take pretty long walk that mornin', down Deep Brook way. Me not hurry Fanny. She must go slow. She have touch of roomatiz, I guess. Fins not strong for carry her body fast. Mebbe she be little weak on the heart, for she puff and sweat.

"Well, we come Deep Brook bridge. Plank gone out of bridge, leavin' space 'bout foot wide. Me step over and walk on, not thinkin' 'bout trouble for Fanny. Poor old girl! She must been tryin' hard for git across. But her number was up. She couldn't manage it. Me look back just time enough to see her fallin' through. She give me a look. 'Twas a wonderful look she give me, Mr. Kennedy. Can't never forget it. Her eyes was full of love and tears. Seems she knowed 'twas good-bye, Joe. If I live to be a hundred, I'll be thinkin' of that look in Fanny's eyes. The brook was full of water when Fanny fell into it and got . . . *drownded!*"

Joe turned his back again.

"'Twas a sad bereavement for you, Joe," said Kennedy, "but you had the consolation of knowing that Fanny died on her 'native heath,' so to speak."

"Yassir. But they ain't never been nobody to take Fanny's place with me. Never will be, nuther."

"Perhaps that's why you're a bachelor."

"Yas. I guess, mebbe."

Kennedy did not doubt that Joe had often told this typical Indian leg-pulling story, but felt certain he had never related it to a more appreciative listener.

Hobart now left his fishing-tackle and sprawled out alongside of Kennedy. He was in expansive mood, in more senses than one. He loosened his belt a couple of inches and grunted in access of comfort.

"Great life, this! It's mouth, matter and wisdom," he remarked.

"You've hit it," responded Kennedy, "mouth and matter here beside me, and the wisdom over there." He inclined his head in the direction of Joe.

Hobart beamed.

"Joe's a wise old guy, sure enough," he agreed. "Most people think Indians have no sense of humour, but they're away off the track. I reckon the Micmac Indian is the most humorous man in the world. He has a fantastic mind and when he opens it up to you you're seeing things. Guess we're all seeing things and feeling 'em, too, this witching eve. Are you really enjoying the trip?"

"Sure! Up to the handle! It takes a lot of this

sort of thing to kill a man. I could stand a month of it without going into decline."

Kennedy's thoughts turned to Margaret. She had sailed from England that day. The ship would now be well out to sea. Every moment would be bringing her nearer to him. It was fine to know that she was well and strong again. Her letters had assured him of that. She wrote three times a week, long, newsy, descriptive letters, relating all her movements and giving him pleasing pictures of her life in the old English home. Sir James was a delightful host though now considerably weakened by age. He loved to hear her talk of Gordon and of the new life awaiting her in the great west land. His joy in her companionship was touching to witness.

"You're all I have, my child," Sir James had told her, "and I can have you but a very little while. Pray that I may not be left here long in my loneliness! I've had my day—a good full day, too. I shall be glad now to move on out of this evening time into the light of morning over yonder."

Margaret wrote about the disposition of her grandfather's property. She had persuaded him to alter his will and to reduce the amount he intended to leave her. She would now inherit a hundred thousand dollars along with his plate and paintings. The home was to be sold and the proceeds, together with his other holdings, were to be given to various charitable institutions. She would be

able to return the money Silcox had given her father and have enough left for a moderate living income. She knew this would meet with Gordon's approval.

There would be grand times for them in the coming years when they should visit England together. She wrote of the walking tours they would take and the points of historic interest they would visit. She reminded him of her former wish that she might have two lives and live them both at the same time. That would be possible now. They could both enjoy that privilege. They could flavour their new world life with old world essence. They could mix the old wine with the new.

Then came the news of her father's death to plunge her into mourning. She had always cherished a warm affection for him, an affection that remained unchilled despite the trouble he had brought upon her. Indeed, that trouble served to draw father and daughter closer to each other. During his imprisonment, as she witnessed his remorse and hopelessness, and later his ambition to make amends, her heart had been filled with ineffable tenderness for him. Her sorrow at his death was all the greater in view of the rapid strides he had been making towards self-recovery.

Yet her sorrow was mixed with a sense of joyous pride. She would not grieve for him overmuch—he had died in such a fine strong way—like a soldier on the battlefield.

"He made good," she declared; "he redeemed himself. I shall never blush for him again."

And now she was on the way back to the land where love and duty were awaiting her. Kennedy wondered what her thoughts might be that night. He wondered what view she would take of his action in turning down Poulton's proposal. He knew she had great ambitions for him; perhaps she had ambitions for herself. She might have had a distinguished position in Alberta as the wife of a Cabinet Minister. Should he have consulted her before giving his decision? And here was another problem. If Hobart knew what he was saying, and Metropolitan Church was about to invite him to its pastorate, how would she view the matter? Would it be fair to her if he should accept it? On the other hand, would it be fair to her if he should decline it?

True, she had expressed a preference for ranch life over city life. But possibly she was more attracted by the novelty of it than the reality of it. Though she was a good sportswoman and fond of outdoor life, yet she had never lived on a prairie. There were features of that life with which she was unacquainted. She had not envisaged them. It was a rough life, when all was said and done. And she was fine-grained. She was an English lady. She was exquisite. Margaret on a ranch! Would it not be like stitching gold lace to homespun?

And what was his own preference? Ah, there

came a rub. Last Sunday night he had lain awake till dawn. The experiences of the day had banished sleep. He almost regretted that he had accepted the invitation to preach in Metropolitan Church. He was at war with himself. Perhaps it would have been better had he taken Jim's advice. It was a glorious privilege to be able to preach to people who were intellectually alert, socially influential, people who were directing the affairs of a great city and meeting life's challenge amid daily competitions. He had felt that in the old days at Memorial. He realized it now more fully than ever. His passion for preaching blazed up within him seven times hotter than before. And here was another Sunday to be gone through with in that great pulpit. Where would he stand at the close of it?

He mused a long time on these matters. At length, Hobart asked, "Are you asleep? If you want to sleep, don't mind me! Only, you'd better get into the tent."

Kennedy got up and stretched his legs and arms.

"Pardon me, old chap! I'm a dull dog. I wasn't sleeping. I was thinking. I've got quite a few things to think about just now, you know. Some of them rather serious things."

"I guess that's about right," replied Hobart. "Keep on thinking! You couldn't find a better place for working your think-box than just here on this spot."

XXV

THE OPEN DOOR

WHEN Kennedy entered the Metropolitan Church pulpit on the following Sunday morning he felt depressed. He knew that unless he could shake off this feeling his preaching would be a failure. It occurred to him that failure and humiliation might be what he needed. Then he woke up his will and pushed the morbid notion aside. As he rose to offer the invocation his heart awoke and a sweet light broke upon his mind. During the singing of the opening hymn his spirit bounded into liberty. The great organ was filling the vast church with soul-stirring music while choir and congregation sang:

"Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His works most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways."

He took for his subject—The Appeal of Religion. He dwelt upon its appeal to the intellect, to man's sense of incompleteness and disability and to his craving for life after death. His words

searched deep. The great throng of worshippers listened rapt and motionless.

He brought his sermon to a close by painting a word-picture to illuminate his message:

"My thoughts turn back, this morning, to a little spring from which I used to drink in years gone by," he said. "It was born hundreds of miles from the sea. It first breaks into light under an old elm-tree in a quiet meadow. One might think it would be content to live its life out in that peaceful place. Why need it roam abroad to lose its serenity amid the confusions of the world and risk contamination from the ways of men? Let it abide where it was born, amid bright ferns and grasses, with nothing to disturb its sweet tranquillity. No sounds will intrude upon it here, save the lowing of kine, the shouts of playing children and the songs of happy birds.

"But the little spring pays no heed to my counsel of quiescence. It laughs my philosophy to scorn. Even as I bend to put my lips to it, I behold it smitten with the wanderlust. A rill of its transparent water is already making its furtive way through the grasses of the meadow. It is a born traveller and it has started on its long journey to find the sea.

"Presently the rill unites with other rills to form a brook. The brook hurries on to a river. The river flows into Lake Ontario. After much mingling and tossing of waters in that vast basin, there

comes a seaward surge and lo! the majestic St. Lawrence breaks forth on its run to the Atlantic.

"That little rill was wise in that it would not listen to me. Had it sunk down into the pasture where it was born, it would have missed the end for which it had been called into being. It heard the summons of the deep and knew it must obey. Every limpid impulse of its heart urged it away upon the great adventure. It was a child of the sea, begotten of the great father of waters, and it rushed away to the sea's embrace. Even so do we belong to that endless life that surges in the heart of God.

"Sometimes a river in its later course creeps wearily towards the sea. Its journey has been long and through some rainless region. It has become but a feeble trickle feeling its slow way forward. But now it meets the ocean tide and, behold! it is a thing new-born. The strength and fullness of the sea flow into it. It is deepened, thrilled with newness of life. Its days of feebleness are ended. It is one forever with the boundless ocean. Even so do we go to God when the current of the soul responds to His call of love."

There was no demonstration at the conclusion of the service, nothing approaching an ovation. The congregation quietly dispersed, the majority of them being of Scottish descent. A few went forward to shake hands with the minister and to say "Thank you for your helpful words." The officials

assembled in the vestry looked like a company of bank directors who had just been listening to an annual report that recorded phenomenal prosperity. When Kennedy entered the room it could be observed that they were in the indicative mood and possessive case. They said but little to him beyond the statement that he was giving them all a happy time.

On the way to his home in Westmount Hobart motored Kennedy to the top of St. Croix Avenue and called his attention to a beautiful stone house then unoccupied.

"It's the Metropolitan manse and one of the best houses in Westmount," he said. "Everything up to date. What do you think of the view?"

"Very fine, indeed," replied Kennedy.

"A woman coming over from England to make her home in Canada wouldn't need to look much further, eh?" insinuated Hobart.

"It would depend upon circumstances, temperament, outlook on life and a lot of other considerations. If she were coming to get married or to join her husband, she would be apt to consult his interests and preferences."

"Oh, sure. But if he could give her a home like that and at the same time command an influential and well-paid position for himself?"

"It would weigh with him, certainly. A man naturally wishes to surround his wife with comforts and conveniences. He wants to give her all the

good things there are. He wants to give her the best things. It's often a difficult matter to decide between relative values and to say this or that is best. Haven't you found it so, old chap?"

"Not often. I usually know what I want and go for it. I'm a firm believer in taking the current while it serves."

That evening Kennedy preached with unusual power. He selected the well-worn text, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It was a sermon that involved everybody; not a sermon which men could sit back comfortably and listen to, but one in which they were compelled to participate. On the part of the preacher it was a pursuit. He was tracking his hearers relentlessly through the devious ways which they were taking into the regions where human souls grow sluggish, feeble and sick unto death. He was a very "hound of heaven" out upon the trail in the darkness and the storm, calling to the fugitives and clutching at their fleeing forms.

"Do not try to hide your sin away *from* God!" he cried; "cast yourself upon His breast and hide yourself and your sin *in* God!" . . . Again, he was saying, "We may try to ignore the fact of sin, but it will not down. It appears unbidden at the feasts of life like Banquo's ghost. Sinai and Calvary are in our blood." And again: "God must save you to the uttermost or not at all. He must

save you from all your sins, not all . . . *except one.* You cannot learn to swim while you keep one foot on the sand. You may wade out into the sea until the water touches your very lips, but you cannot swim until you cast your full weight upon the waves. You may stand and drown as the billows go over your head. Give yourself to God completely and you will find yourself sustained."

At the close of the service two men hurried forward to greet Kennedy. They were Charlie Edwards and Frank Parr, of Toronto.

"Couldn't miss it, pastor," cried Edwards. "We saw by the papers that you were here, so we came down last night. Been here at both services. Say! What's happened to you? You could preach some in the old days, but not like this. You put it all over *everybody* here, tonight."

Edwards gazed at Kennedy in a wistful yearning way as his arm went round his waist. Kennedy stood between his two friends, towering above them with a hand on the shoulder of each.

"It's great to see you boys again. Mighty good of you to come down. How are things at Rosemount? Any prospects of a settlement?"

"Only one man in view, but he's the right one. We're going to leave no stone unturned to get him. We propose to offer him eight thousand a year and a house. We can give him an absolutely united church. We'll give him a free hand and anything he cares to ask for."

"Lucky chap! Who is he? Do I know him?"

Edwards looked at Parr and nodded his head.

"You know him pretty well," Parr said. "His name is Gordon Kennedy. He has been long enough out in the wild and woolly. We want him back where he belongs."

Kennedy's face flushed.

"Now, look here, boys," he replied, "there must be nothing like that. Nothing like that at all. I couldn't think of going back to Rosemount now, under any circumstances."

"Bunkum! It was a mistake to leave. Haven't you felt that way about it yourself?"

"No, not for an instant. But, even granting that I made a mistake in leaving, I'm sure I should make a greater mistake in going back. That chapter of my life is closed, not to be reopened."

"Griffin is as keen for you as the rest of us," said Edwards; "or rather, he is as keen for you as he can be for anyone. But he's off the board now. However, this isn't the place to discuss the matter. I see the officials are hovering round. Get rid of 'em as soon as you can and come to the Windsor with us. We'll wait for you outside."

"I should love to come, but I'm staying with Al. Hobart at Westmount. He's expecting to take me home with him."

"Bring him along! Where is he? Mebbe he'll be useful. In any case he'll be welcome."

Kennedy called Hobart and introduced him to his

Toronto friends. He thanked them cordially for their invitation, but declined it.

"No, you'll want him to yourselves," he said. "Only right and natural. No, I won't come. Go on and make a night of it! Not *all* night, if I may be so bold as to say so, for he has had a strenuous day."

"We'll take good care of him, depend on that," said Edwards. "It's fine to get the feel of him again. Guess you appreciate that."

"Sure I do. When you get in touch with him you've got hold of good stuff. Fine. Oh, yes; and just as firm as he's fine."

Kennedy had gone to the vestry to get his hat. He found twenty-three men in the room—the whole official board of Metropolitan Church—minus Hobart. Senator McClintock acted as spokesman.

"Mr. Kennedy," he said, "we want to thank you for the great service you've rendered us. In doing this we know that we are voicing the feeling of all our people. We hope the visit has been a pleasant one for you."

"Thank you, I've had a very happy time," answered Gordon. "I shall never forget it. I'll often think of you and will always take a deep interest in your welfare."

"We're glad to hear you say that, Mr. Kennedy," the Senator continued. "It encourages us to hope that you will favourably consider the proposition we have to submit to you. We want you for

our minister. Metropolitan Church renews, and with redoubled urgency, the invitation extended to you last September. We believe we are offering you the most influential Protestant pulpit in Canada. We believe we have been providentially led in this matter. The stipend is ten thousand dollars a year and a house free of rent and taxes. We should like you to furnish the house to suit yourself and let us pay the bill, anything up to three thousand dollars. You can have three months' vacation every year. We hope you will give the matter most earnest consideration and let us have your decision at the earliest possible date. If you accept the invitation, we pledge you our united loyalty and coöperation. We shall also be proud to welcome your wife amongst us. We hope you will bring her direct to Montreal upon her arrival from England."

Kennedy realized that he now stood at the parting of the ways. He was profoundly moved. This offer was a more generous and appealing one than he had dreamed of. It would place him at the summit of pulpit opportunity. It would open to him a sphere of influence ample enough to satisfy all his early ministerial ambitions. It would provide him with the social life which his nature craved and bring him into touch with the culture so congenial to his tastes.

Nor would it cut him off from influence on the life of the West. From this point of vantage he could be sending men and money into the prairie

provinces to continue and expand the work he had initiated. This phase of the situation made a strong appeal to him.

His face showed mental stress and his voice trembled slightly as he said: "Gentlemen, at this moment I must ask your indulgence. I am almost overwhelmed by the honour of this invitation. It dares me and, in a way, it scares me. I'm in for a fight with myself and I don't know how the fight will end. I do not see the clear path of duty. You will understand that it is a matter which very deeply concerns my wife. I must talk the matter over with her. I hope and believe I shall be able to give you my answer in a few days."

"Thank you," said Senator McClintock. "All I can add to what I've already said is this: We hope you will give due weight to the fact that this is a unanimous invitation from a great church that has sincerely prayed for guidance. We believe that God has guided us in making this approach to you and we cannot think He has led us astray."

As Kennedy left the church Edwards and Parr laid hold of him and hustled him into a taxi.

"Good man, to get away so soon!" said Edwards. "We were afraid those gas-bags in there might hold you up."

"They're not gas-bags. They're a very quiet lot of men. You misjudge them," replied Kennedy.

"Mebbe so; but we've been taking stock of things around here. We've had our eyes open and

our ears, too. We scented something brewing. Did they hint anything to you?"

"No, there was no hinting at anything, so far as I could observe."

"Just as well. If they start a game to pull you here, Memorial declares war on Metropolitan forthwith," declared Edwards.

"Now, fellows, you've got to quit this," Kennedy replied heatedly. "I've told you plainly that I'm not going back to Toronto. That's final. If you begin arguing about it, you'll just spoil our little visit. It's great to have this evening with you; like cold water to a thirsty throat. Don't be tiresome now. It may be a long time before we meet again."

"We don't want to irritate you," said Parr. "If there's no hope of you coming back to Toronto, then the next best thing is to have you in Montreal. It's a sure thing that you must come East where the big things are—the big cities, the people, the business and the money. Honest to goodness, didn't they hint anything to you this evening?"

"No. If you must have it, they spoke straight out and to the point. They have invited me to Metropolitan Church and urged me to accept the invitation."

"Well, of course, that settles it. We know that we can't compete with them. Of course, you'll come?"

"God only knows. He hasn't told me yet."

"What did you say to them?"

"I told them I hoped to give an answer in a few days. Now, boys, please let up on this! I want to cool down and get my head clear."

They had supper at the hotel and an hour or two of free and easy talk such as they had often enjoyed on Sunday evenings. Kennedy threw off his seriousness and became as playful as a boy. It was something like getting home from a foreign land to be with these old chums again and to feel the life of a great city pulsating around him.

When Kennedy at last got to bed it was only to spend another sleepless night. He tried to look at his problem from every viewpoint. He asked himself how many religious services one would need to conduct in the school-houses of Alberta before he could address as many people as he had preached to on the last two Sundays? He reckoned that it would take at least a year and he would need to travel thousands of miles to do it. He wondered how many Western congregations he would need to face before he could talk to as much money as was represented in Metropolitan Church. When he considered the question of influence on national life, he could see that the balance tipped decidedly in favour of this Eastern pastorate. Was it not a minister's duty to exercise the greatest possible influence?

Here was a great mass of intelligent opinion in Toronto and Montreal insisting that duty called

him Eastward. He smiled as he said to himself, "It's another 'Tale of Two Cities.'"

And there was Margaret coming to meet him as fast as the *Montcalm* could carry her. Could he say that he really knew how her mind would work upon this problem? He believed she would want him to decide the matter as his own heart might dictate. She would work with him and do her best to make him happy whether he should live East or West; but what the inmost desire of her own heart might be he could not tell. She was as yet but his wife in law—an anomalous relationship. Possibly he knew less about her than he imagined he did.

Then he went all over the ground again and yet again, finding it impossible to cast the anchor of decision here or there. The weight of it wearied him. At length his mind refused to work. He tried to pray—and fell asleep.

On the following day he had a long letter from Jim. Hobart had written Jim of the way things were shaping for Gordon in Montreal. Much to Gordon's astonishment, Jim urged him to re-enter the pastorate through the door that was opening for him at Metropolitan Church.

"This advice may seem inconsistent with what I've been saying to you during the last ten months," Jim wrote, "but it isn't really so. When you came out here I was a little apprehensive about the effect of the ministry upon your manhood. I wondered

if you were facing the grim realities of life and standing up to them like a thoroughbred or whether you were following the lines of least resistance. I have no doubt at all on that score now. I know that preaching is the very breath of life to you. It is the one and only way in which you can fully express yourself and bring your powers to bear upon the lives of men. You have been tried and you have come forth as gold.

"The door now opening before you is a wide one. It swings on two hinges—the appreciation of men and the providence of God. You must enter it. You will find a large place for service and you will serve well. You will be a strong helper of other men. You have the right spirit and equipment.

"I always thought well of you, Gordon, I, who had a poor opinion of parsons as a class. But I got a new peep into the soul of you the day you turned down Poulton's offer. Ever since then I've been veering round to the conviction that the pulpit must be your throne.

"By accepting this Montreal invitation you will be putting yourself in line with the work that God and nature intended you to do. You have lost no time by spending these ten months on the prairie. You will be preaching with new power now. It was a good post-graduate course for you.

"May I say, also, that I think you owe it to Margaret to take on this job? You will remember

that she married a minister, one who was at the head of a great church. The picture of life which you presented to her was enclosed within that frame. She formed her expectations accordingly. You can now make her to realize those expectations.

"I have no doubt she would shape up nobly to any line of work you might offer her; but you know that, while this prairie life is all right for strong men, it is a hard and lonely life for a woman, especially for a gently nurtured English lady.

"I am free to say these things now, though wild horses could not have dragged them out of me had circumstances developed differently.

"You are not to feel yourself bound in any way by your partnership here. Those matters can be easily re-adjusted. I shall miss you, but I shall be mighty happy in all my thoughts of you. Go to it, my boy! It is your destiny."

XXVI

CONCLUSION

THE *Montcalm* had a fine run across the Atlantic. The sea was like a mill-pond all the way. Poor sailor though she was, Mrs. Silcox suffered no discomfort. For Margaret the voyage was charged with high excitement which grew more intense with every passing hour. She felt as if all her thoughts were set to music. She told her aunt that it seemed like listening all the while to the strains of a grand orchestra. Excitement did not take away her appetite, though it affected her sleep to some extent. She declared, however, that the sleep she got was so delicious and attended by such happy dreams that an hour of it was worth a whole night of ordinary slumber. There was no question about her health. She was a picture of wholesome radiant womanhood.

All the way across, Margaret felt as if Gordon were making the voyage with her. His invisible presence seemed to attend her by day and night. While the ship was on the open sea it seemed that they were free to roam together far and wide. The universe was theirs. No fetters bound their spirits, no banks restrained their energies. When the ves-

sel entered the St. Lawrence her mood changed. Here was limitation. Here were fixed and motionless things—solid earth and rigid banks. They sailed past little settlements where life looked static and stagnant. As the river narrowed and the ship shot forward through the quickening current she realized that she was being swiftly borne from romance into reality and from the realm of dreams into the world of duty.

She wondered how Gordon had felt to be preaching again in a city church. What effect would it have upon him? She was pleased that such an opportunity had come to him. It meant that he was not buried out of sight and forgotten. Perhaps he would frequently be asked to take holiday Sundays in city churches. She was unaware that Metropolitan Church was still pastorless.

Margaret had been considerably agitated by Gordon's letter telling her of Premier Poulton's offer and his refusal of it. That would have been a fine position for him. She could not fully understand why he had not accepted it. It seemed to her that education and religion were close associates. Each led into the other, or should do so. She would have said that the best man for a Minister of Education was a minister of religion. Gordon had referred to the political aspect of the matter. He would need to contest elections. Party feeling ran so strongly in the West that elections by acclamation were practically unknown. That feature of

the situation would be distasteful to him. But his chief reasons for refusing the position were the facts that it would divert him from his preaching and separate him from active partnership with Jim. She felt that he had taken a strong line even though it might appear to be to his own disadvantage. She determined to show no feeling of disappointment.

The *Montcalm* was due to reach Quebec at four in the afternoon. Having taken a brief rest in their stateroom, after lunch, the ladies began their preparations for landing. Margaret put on her going-away costume. It was the first time she had worn it since her wedding-day. When the last touch had been given she put her arms around Mrs. Silcox and kissed her.

"Do I look a little like a bride?" she asked, as the blushes suffused her face.

"Indeed you do! A lovely bride! You look handsomer and more charming than you did the day you were married."

"I'm not satisfied with my looks, but I hope Gordon will be. He admired this costume."

Kennedy was at the pier an hour before the ship was due to arrive. The waiting time seemed interminable. He paced to and fro restlessly. He had always experienced nervous tension when about to enter a pulpit, but he had never gone through anything like this. At length the *Montcalm* broke into view. The crowd shouted, "Here she comes."

Kennedy's heart was in his throat and kicking

like a bronco. He raised his field-glasses and fixed his gaze upon the vessel. As she drew near he searched the deck, hoping to identify her among the crowd of passengers. It didn't take him long. There she was, right at the bow. Yes, and she had recognized him. She was waving her handkerchief. Presently the handkerchief went to her eyes.

As Margaret walked down the gangway Kennedy could see that she was in perfect health. Every movement told of eager energetic life. A moment later she was clasped in her husband's arms and oblivious to all the world but him.

The train for the West was in waiting. They saw Mrs. Silcox aboard of it and stayed with her until it steamed away. Then they drove to the "Frontenac."

"Oh, what a glorious place!" cried Margaret. "You couldn't have chosen a lovelier spot for our honeymoon if you had gone over the whole world. I'm sure I shall always love this dear old place."

Their rooms were at the front of the building commanding a superb view of the river and the opposite shore. They stood at an open window, both quivering with excitement.

"Tell me, dearest," she was saying, "about these last two Sundays. Did you enjoy them?"

"Yes; more than I can say," he replied.

A peculiar note in his voice arrested her; but she

remarked calmly, "I was so glad you could have that pleasure."

He made no reply for a moment; then he said, "Margaret, I have startling news for you. The people at Metropolitan Church have asked me to become their minister. They are unanimous and urgent."

Her face paled.

"Do they know everything about us and . . . about Father?"

"Yes, they know the whole story."

She breathed heavily and he could feel that she was trembling.

"Margaret, dear, if I should consider it my duty to accept this invitation, do you think you could conquer your sensitiveness and take your place there freely and fearlessly as the minister's wife? I know they are prepared to love and honour you."

She put her arms around his neck. "Husband mine, I wish I could make some great big sacrifice for you. I owe you such amends. But that old sensitiveness has passed away. Father died so splendidly."

"I'm glad you feel that way. He was a hero, Margaret. He has left a fine and honourable memory."

She looked into his face with eyes glowing with joy and pride.

"Gordon, this is glorious!" she said. "It seems almost too good to be true! Oh, my beloved, you've

got your career back again; not a second best, but the very best best! It's heavenly! You must know what this means for me. I . . . I thank the wonderful good God."

Kennedy remained silent, with his lips pressed against her forehead.

"When will you take up your duties there?" she asked presently.

"They want me to begin on the first of October," he replied.

"Then that will give us time to go out to the ranch and visit Jim. But . . . but what about your partnership with him? What will Jim say?"

"He will raise no objection. Indeed, he urges me to accept this invitation. Jim is a bar of gold."

She nestled in his arms murmuring, "Yes, he's a good man and a wise one." Then she added, "You must telegraph your acceptance of the invitation at once."

He took her two hands in his and held them in a firm grip while his eyes earnestly searched her face.

"And what if I wish to decline the invitation?"

"Oh, you mustn't do that! You mustn't for a single moment think of doing that! It would be madness! It would be throwing away the chance of a lifetime."

His lips parted in a slow smile.

"Then I'm mad," he said.

"What . . . what do you mean, Gordon?"

"I mean that I've decided for a life in the West. Those neglected people of the prairies have captured my heart. Day and night I think of their terrible spiritual destitution. I wish to do what I can to relieve it—not by proxy, but by personal service. I feel it to be my manhood's prime call and the call of God. Do you approve?"

She drew his face down to hers and covered it with kisses, as she murmured, "Joy! Joy! Joy!"

THE END

Printed in the United States of America

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JUL 4 1968

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